

Grace Notes

The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

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The Pastoral Perspective

The liturgical calendar is both blessing and bane. With its steady procession of holidays and seasons, colors and cycle of readings, the church year offers a welcome framework within which we can worship God, read and study Scripture, and journey deeper into our common life as a church. We perennially follow a path that has been blazed, developed, and enhanced by our forebears in the faith. The familiar is good, a guide, a powerful aid to the living of the Christian life. But it is not perfect.

The old adage has it that familiarity breeds contempt. In the church, I believe it can lead to another danger: complacency. We like the familiar in part because it is comforting, because we know how and why and where things are to be done. This may be a good thing when following a route between two places, but it is a danger when we're trying to meet God. Complacency in faith can lead to laziness, lack of intention, and disengagement. Never is this clearer than during the season of Lent.

Consider the Lenten disciplines that many of us will follow this year. Whether we give up or adopt something for the liturgical season, it is likely to be no different from what we've done in years past. As noted earlier, this can be good, since it will offer a framework for a season of reflection and repentance. But it can also lead us into a rut, one where we simply do something because we've done it before.

As we enter into Lent, we would do well to remember that God is not looking for us to simply go through the motions, nor is he interested in whether we can follow a process or routine. What matters to the One who made us in love is what is in our hearts: our intent, our longings, our desires, our priorities. What is it that we really want? Do we truly seek to repent? Do we truly seek to turn away from sin? Do we hope and pray to make a break with those things that come between us and God, and between us and our brothers

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SUNDAY SERVICE

ANNUAL MEETING 2015

Sunday, February 8—Following Worship

FEBRUARY 15 IS SCOUT SUNDAY

Our church is proud to serve as the host and charter organization for both Boy Scout Troop 279 and Cub Scout Pack 279, offering meeting space throughout the year. On February 15, we recognize this faithful relationship by inviting the scouts to join us and participate in worship.

Please plan to attend and support Scouting!

Participate in Worship!

Serve as a Liturgist or Greeter/Usher

Have you dreamed of handing out bulletins on Sunday? Or delivering the call to worship and reading scripture from the lectern? Or walking gracefully from pew to pew collecting the offering?

We can make that dream a reality.

No experience or training is required. If you'd like to serve as either a liturgist or a greeter/usher, please contact the church office.

Your congregation will thank you!



Ash Wednesday
Ecumenical
Service

February 18, 7:00 pm
FCC Sanctuary

We open our church to neighbors and friends for a worship service initiating the holy season of Lent.

Please join us in observing this crucial point in the church year.

SOUPER BOWL OVERTIME!!

Once again we're "tackling" hunger in our local community with a soup collection on the first two weekends in February. Please leave your canned items in the collection boxes in the Parish Hall, and we'll distribute them to Headrest, Listen Community Services, and the UV Haven.
(Donations accepted through February 8.)

Thanks for your generosity!

COMMUNITY DINNER

Sunday, February 22, at 5:00 pm

Leaders: WOMEN OF THE CHURCH

Please participate in this vital service to our local community! Thanks to Women of the Church for leading this month's effort; volunteers old and new are welcome to donate ingredients and help with cooking/prep, set-up, serving, and clean-up.

To offer help, look for sign-ups in the Parish Hall, or contact the church office.

Lenten Lunch Bag Offering

Beginning Sunday, February 22

The children of our Church School will once again be distributing bags for their Lenten collection to benefit David's House. Giving up a little change each day during Lent can mean a lot of change after Easter!

Queued for Coffee Hour

February—Christian Education

March—Diaconate

April—Mission and Social Action

May—Women of the Church

FEBRUARY 2015 CALENDAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 10a Worship/ Church School (Communion) 11:15a M&SA	2 6:15p Cub Scouts (Wolf)	3 5:30p Cub Scouts (Bear) 7p Boy Scouts 7p Quicksilver Rehearsal	4 6p UVPRN	5 5p Headrest Support Group 6p Choir	6	7 8a Valentine's Breakfast 9a Bible Study 10:15a Juneberry Music
8 10a Worship/ Church School 11:15a 2015 FCC ANNUAL MEETING	9 3p WCBH After-school 6:15p Cub Scouts (Wolf) 7p Diaconate	10 5:30p Cub Scouts (Bear) 7p Boy Scouts	11 8a-4p WIC 6p UVPRN 7p VT Oneness 7p Christian Ed Committee	12 9:30a-4p Grafton-Orange 5p Headrest Support Group 6p Choir	13	14 9a Bible Study 10:15a Juneberry Music
15 10a Worship/ Church School (Scout Sunday)	16	17 7p Church Council 7p Boy Scouts 7p Quicksilver Rehearsal	18 ASH WEDNESDAY (Lent Begins) 6p UVPRN 7p Ecumenical Service at FCC	19 5p Headrest Support Group 6p Choir	20	21 9a Bible Study 10:15a Juneberry Music
22 10a Worship/ Church School 11:15a Board of Governors 12:30p Fire and Ice! (Plainfield) 5p Community Dinner	23 MARCH NEWSLETTER CONTENT DUE 3p WCBH After-school	24 7p Boy Scouts 7p Quicksilver Rehearsal	25 6p UVPRN	26 10a-7p WIC 5p Headrest Support Group 6p Choir	27	28 9a Bible Study 10:15a Juneberry Music
1 10a Worship/ Church School (Communion) 11:15a M&SA	2 6:15p Cub Scouts (Wolf)	3 5:30p Cub Scouts (Bear) 7p Boy Scouts 7p Quicksilver Rehearsal	4 6p UVPRN	5 5p Headrest Support Group 6p Choir	6	7 8a Men's Breakfast 9a Bible Study 10:15a Juneberry Music

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

COMMITTEE NOTES

CHURCH COUNCIL

At the January Council meeting Todd Heatherton surveyed year-end figures, noting again that pledges are down. He added, though, that Waldo trust fund distributions could be used to repay the escrow accounts that had been depleted in the past two years. The church also took in more payments for use of church space. Special collection income has remained relatively steady.

Todd also presented the Finance Committee's proposed budget for 2015, pointing out just a few areas of interest. One expense that appears significantly lower is

heating costs, reflecting both reduced prices and usage conservation. Also, the Grafton-Orange Association contribution, which is determined by number of active members, could be revised downward with a more thorough review of our membership rolls.

Amy Driscoll reported on the status of the 2015 nominating process, which remains incomplete. She noted a few areas of particular concern, such as the need for a third trustee and new members on Stewardship and Nominating. Openings also exist on the Board of Governors, the Diaconate, and Mission and Social Action.

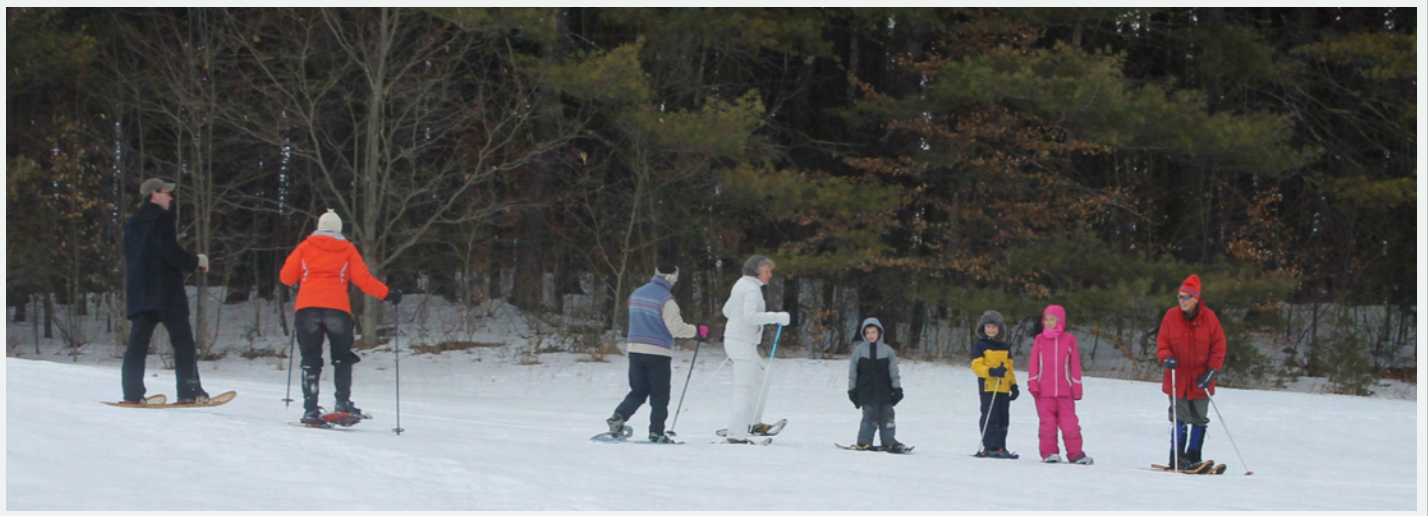
Discussion also focused on the role and responsibilities of the Church Administrator, and on the expected hours and compensation for this position. As volunteer roles change (for example Treasurer and Clerk) and committees rely heavily on the church office for more centralized coordination, the Administrator is charged with more responsibilities. Barry Schuster will be continuing this discussion with the Personnel Committee.

Jon Scott noted that a reminder has been sent out regarding 2015 pledges, asserting the usefulness of the pledge process to our annual planning.

FIRE *and* **ICE**

Sunday, February 22, 12:30 pm (*alt. date March 1*)

Continuing its program of spiritual walks, the FCC "Outing Club" invites everyone to meet after worship at Ron Bailey's house in Plainfield village for **FIRE AND ICE**. We'll grill hot dogs over a fire pit, down some cocoa, then head out through fields and forest to Blow-Me-Down Brook, before returning to the fire for s'mores. Both one-hour and half-hour snowshoe loops available. (Don't have snowshoes? We'll lend you a pair!)



COMMITTEE NOTES

Valentine's Breakfast!

Saturday, February 7, 8:00

The MEN'S FELLOWSHIP warmly invites everyone—regardless of gender!—to its monthly breakfast on February 7. All are welcome to celebrate Valentine's Day a week early, with delicious food and Christian fellowship.

RSVP to the church office or sign-up in the Parish Hall.

2015 ANNUAL MEETING—SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8

The Annual Meeting of the First Congregational Church of Lebanon, NH, will be held in the Parish Hall on Sunday, February 8, 2015, immediately following the worship service, for the purpose of:

1. The election of all officers provided for under the CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS of the church.
2. To hear the reports of all officers, committees, and organizations, as required under the CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS of the church.
3. To consider and act upon any other matters relating to the general church welfare that may properly come before this meeting, including but not limited to the following:
A. Church Council, following recommendations from the Nominating Committee and an ad-hoc task force for reviewing the church's committee structure, proposes a number of amendments to the CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS, all concerning the required membership of committees. The rationale behind these amendments is to allow the nominating process flexibility in cases when committee and officer vacancies exceed the number of congregation members willing and available to fill them. Because the proposed amendments are fragmentary and widely dispersed throughout the BY-LAWS, their verbatim inclusion within this meeting warrant is impractical. Thus, a copy of the complete BY-LAWS with revisions clearly highlighted in bright yellow has been posted with this warrant for congregational review; additionally, the revised copy has been made available online on the church web site.

From the Nominating Committee

Volunteer Opportunities *Still Available!*

As we begin the new year and a new term for our volunteer committees, Church Council and the Nominating Committee ask you to think about how you might best contribute your own skills, interests, and energy to our mission and ministry.

If you're interested in learning about a particular committee or available opportunities, **please contact Barry Schuster (603-448-5937/ ivylegal@gmail.com) or Amy Driscoll (603-448-0976/ amykdriscoll@gmail.com).**

February Meetings

Mission/Social Action and Stewardship	2/1, 11:15
2015 ANNUAL MEETING	2/8, 11:15
Diaconate	2/9, 7:00
Christian Education	2/11, 7:00
Church Council	2/17, 7:00
Board of Governors	2/22, 11:15

March Meetings

Mission/Social Action and Stewardship	3/1, 11:15
Music Committee	3/8, 11:15
Diaconate	3/9, 7:00
Christian Education	3/11, 7:00
Church Council	3/17, 7:00
Board of Governors	3/22, 11:15

THE SEASON OF LENT AT FCC

Lent is a time for us to reflect upon our relationship with God, to examine our walk with Jesus, and to take stock of our lives as we prepare for the great miracle and gift of Easter.

Lent is a time to look within our souls and hearts, to set aside those things that separate us from God and God's people.

Lent is a time to journey into the wilderness, so that we may fully enter into the New Creation.

***Journey with us during Lent this year
in worship, reflection, study, and service.***

WORSHIP

February 18—Ash Wednesday

7 pm: Ecumenical Service with Imposition of Ashes, at FCC

March 29—Palm Sunday

10 am: Liturgy of the Palms, Sanctuary

April 2—Maundy Thursday

7 pm: Service of Tenebrae, Stripping of the Altar

April 3—Good Friday

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

3 pm: Ecumenical Stations of the Cross Walk (meet at Sacred Heart Church)

7 pm: Service of the Word and Prayer, Sanctuary

April 5—EASTER

6 am: Ecumenical Sunrise Service, Colburn Park

6:30 am: Community Breakfast to benefit Second Growth, Parish Hall

10 am: Festival Service with Holy Communion, Sanctuary

REFLECTION

Saturday, March 14, 9 am-12 pm—Lenten Mini-Retreat at FCC

Gather for a morning of fellowship, reflection, and meditation grounded in Scripture.

Daily Lenten Reflections

Every day from Ash Wednesday through Easter, receive a devotional reflection by email.

Sign up by sending a message to silver@fccleeb.org.

THE SEASON OF LENT AT FCC

STUDY

“Who Do You Say I Am?”

A three-part adult-education series reflecting on Jesus Christ, the center of our faith.

Sunday, March 8—Jesus: The Man of History

Sunday, March 15—Christ: The Figure of Faith

Sunday, March 22—Jesus Christ: Priest, King, Redeemer

SERVICE AND STEWARDSHIP

February 22–March 29—Church School Lenten Lunch Bag Collection

A special offering supporting student scholarships in El Salvador and supplies for David’s House at DHMC. Children will distribute bags on the first Sunday of Lent and collect them on Palm Sunday.

Sunday, March 15—One Great Hour of Sharing

A special, nationwide mission offering for health, education, refugee, agricultural, and emergency-relief initiatives around the world.

Sundays in March, 2:30 pm—Worship Services at Genesis Life Care

Each Sunday afternoon in March (1, 8, 15, 22, and 29) a group from FCC will lead these services for our neighbors at Genesis. If you would like to participate, please contact Steve Silver or any deacon.

Sundays, February 22 and March 22, 5:00 pm— Community Dinner at FCC

The Pastoral Perspective, *continued from Page 1*

and sisters in Christ? What matters to Jesus is how we grapple with these questions—not whether or not we diligently forego our chocolate for forty days and forty nights. What captures our Lord’s attention is our willingness to venture into the wilderness of the Spirit, where we are called to pray and reflect about things we might prefer to leave unexamined and unengaged.

And so, in the days approaching Ash Wednesday, let us give thanks for the seasons of the church year and offer gratitude for things familiar. Let’s give thanks not because the familiar seasons comfort us, not because they make life easy, but because they—if we are open to the example of Jesus Christ and the workings of the Holy Spirit—can bring us to a startlingly new place, one where we can be open and honest before and with God.

Yours faithfully,

Steve

SERVICE AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Community Dinner Leaders Needed!

We are blessed and grateful to have a consistent group of church members who generously commit time and resources to our Community Dinners. We would love to expand that group!

Please consider helping however you can, whether it's just pitching in a bag of potatoes, serving and cleaning up, or actually organizing an entire meal.

Below is a list of those leading our monthly dinners in 2015, and as you can see, we still need volunteers! If you're interested in this important role or have questions about it, please contact the church office.

2/22	Women of the Church
3/22	John Gilliatt
4/26	Christian Education
5/24	(open)
6/28	(open)
7/26	(open)
8/23	(open)
9/27	Women of the Church
10/25	Christian Education
11/22	(open)
12/27	Nan Parsons

PREPARED TO SERVE



Take Pride in how far we've come....

Have Faith in how far we can go!

FEBRUARY 21ST, 2015

Pembroke Academy - Pembroke, NH

Prepared to Serve 2015

NH Conference, UCC

Saturday, February 21, 8:00 to 3:30

Pembroke Academy, Pembroke, NH

Prepared to Serve is a training event for all members of the NH Conference of the UCC, offering workshops on topics ranging from stewardship, leadership, and finances to global missions and Christian education. All are invited to this enriching, informative day of classes, exhibits, and worship.

For details and registration, visit www.nhcucc.org.

Fee: \$40 until 2/13, \$50 until 2/19, \$60 day-of
(includes resources, breakfast, and lunch).

Register online or call Donna Follensbee (888-643-8229 x100).



Called to Care offers special assistance to those in our congregation who need it, for whatever reason—illness, loss of a loved one, loneliness, depression, aging issues, and divorce, to name a few. We offer support in the form of cards, phone calls, visits, meals, and transportation.

Now with just eight caregivers, **Called to Care** needs help! If the Spirit moves you to join this rewarding group, please contact Linda Jacobs (mrandmrs.j@comcast.net / 802-296-8251) or Steve Silver.

THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION



Clockwise from top left: 1) A lovely winter altar display most of us never saw, since Kathie Schuster graciously arranged it before realizing that worship was moving to the Parish Hall. 2) As church-school children look on, Steve Silver welcomes Don Rowell, Denise Moriearty, and Henry Danaher as new covenant members on January 11. 3) Marcy Chong, with the able assistance of her family and friends from UV Waldorf School, serves Community Dinner on January 25. As Ron Bailey and Barry Schuster can attest, it was delicious! 4) The SOUPER BOWL has gone into overtime—and there's still some room left in those boxes!



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 • Newsletter Submissions — church@fccleb.org