



Grace Notes

The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

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The Pastoral Perspective

With the arrival of 2015 comes the familiar iconography of a sash-wearing infant seeing off a bearded old gentleman. The former figure is defined by innocence and enthusiasm, the latter marked by weariness. And key to this imagery is our being in on the dark little secret that is unknown to the babe: in twelve months' time, he will be aged and decrepit, ready to be ushered off the stage, part of a never-ending cycle of renewal and decay. Happy New Year!

Perhaps this all seems a bit fatalistic, yet another suggestion that life is futile and any notion we have of exercising control over our destinies is illusory. This is why we should not lose sight of the other baby who anchors seasonal festivities: the Christ-child. As Christians, we know that January 1 is not only the first day of a new year; more importantly, it is one of the twelve days leading up to the Feast of the Epiphany.

While millions of people around the world begin 2015 by focusing their attention on the dropping of an illuminated ball in Times Square, Matthew's Gospel encourages us to look higher and farther, to seek out the rising star that will lead us not to a party for the ages but to life renewed and restored in the most astonishing way. The birth of Jesus is indeed a cause for revelry—but also one for reverence and recommitment. We are called to respond to this moment with joy, prayer, and dedication. What might this look like for our congregation?

Joy can be experienced wherever we choose—in fellowship gatherings, in service projects, and in worship. Think of the laughter one might hear at coffee hour, the easy camaraderie found in the kitchen on a community-dinner Sunday, the delight we experience when one of the kids offers up an amusing yet theologically profound observation during the children's moment. Joy doesn't just happen to us; it's something that we can help to bring about. In the new year I hope we will all be agents of joy.

Prayers—of thanksgiving, petition, confession, adoration—are something we offer God individually and as a community. As a church, the most familiar setting for community prayer is Sunday worship. But there are

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SUNDAY SERVICE

A Conversation About Family Ministry

SUNDAY, JANUARY 11, 11:30 AM

Our congregation has a great group of kids, ranging in age from five to twelve, who regularly participate in our common life. How can we best meet their needs? What might we as a congregation do to attract and invite other families to join us?

Following worship on January 11, all families—active or not, formally members or simply friends—are invited to this open conversation and planning meeting for our ministry for children and families at FCC. From what is learned at this session, we will plan two or three activities for the spring.

All-Church Forum and Potluck SUNDAY, JANUARY 18, 11:30 AM

Halls of Hope: Our Local Mental Health Court

Mental health courts offer a cost-effective alternative to incarceration. They provide a more compassionate response to various misdemeanors triggered by mental health issues and result in better outcomes for society. After worship on January 18, plan to join us for this enlightening presentation on how a new program in our county is encouraging the mentally ill to seek treatment.

Our guest speakers will be **Tony Hutchins** (Managing Attorney, Grafton County Public Defenders office) and **Rosemary Affeldt** (Chair of the Halls of Hope Advisory Panel and a Board Member of the Advocates for the Grafton County Mental Health Courts).

Please bring a potluck dish to share. For more information, please contact Jennifer Grant (802-436-3996 or jenhartland@vermontel.net).

New Members To Be Received January 11

If you're interested in joining our church as a covenant member, you're warmly invited to speak with Steve Silver or one of our deacons.

Which Offering Is Which?

As any semi-regular visitor to Sunday morning worship knows, our stewardship effort asks us to consider a variety of offering collections throughout the year. It's helpful from time to time, then, to recognize that each of those serves a distinct purpose:

Regular pledge offering—Collected every Sunday (or any other time) and treated as unrestricted support for FCC's general operations, ministries, and programming.

Communion offering—Collected every first Sunday of the month, directly supporting our Diaconate's funds for community assistance (gas/grocery cards and other "back-door" ministries), or occasionally designated for a specific mission need (e.g., El Salvador).

Special UCC offerings (e.g., One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen the Church, Neighbors in Need, Christmas Fund)—each collected once annually as part of a regional, national, or international campaign for a particular mission or service cause.

No matter which envelopes we're using on any given Sunday, though, THANKS TO ALL for so generously and consistently supporting this diversity of purposes, both within our congregation and far beyond!

Queued for Coffee Hour

January—Stewardship
February—Christian Education
March—Diaconate

JANUARY 2015 CALENDAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28 10a Worship/ Church School No B of G 5p Community Dinner	29	30 7p Boy Scouts	31 6p UVPRN	1 NEW YEAR'S DAY 5p Headrest Support Group No Choir	2 6p Choir	3 8a Men's Breakfast 9a Bible Study
4 10a Worship/ Church School (Communion) 11:15a M&SA	5 6:15p Cub Scouts (Wolf)	6 5:30p Cub Scouts (Bear) 7p Boy Scouts	7 6p UVPRN	8 9:30a-4p Grafton-Orange 5p Headrest Support Group 6p Choir	9	10 9a Bible Study 10:15a Juneberry Music
11 10a Worship/ Church School (New Members) 11:30a Conversation on Family Ministry	12 2014 ANNUAL REPORTS DUE 3p WCBH After-school 6:15p Cub Scouts (Wolf) 7p Diaconate	13 5:30p Cub Scouts (Bear) 7p Boy Scouts	14 8a-4p WIC 6p UVPRN 7p Christian Ed Committee	15 5p Headrest Support Group 6p Choir	16	17 9a Bible Study 10:15a Juneberry Music
18 10a Worship/ Church School 11:30a Forum and Potluck: Halls of Hope 3p UVMC Choral Concert	19 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY	20 7p Church Council 7p Boy Scouts	21 6p UVPRN	22 10a-7p WIC 5p Headrest Support Group 6p Choir	23 FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER CONTENT DUE 6-9p Leb Rec Dept Quilters	24 9a Bible Study 10a-5p Leb Rec Dept Quilters 10:15a Juneberry Music
25 10a Worship/ Church School 11:15a Board of Governors 5p Community Dinner	26 3p WCBH After-school	27 7p Boy Scouts	28 6p UVPRN	29 5p Headrest Support Group 6p Choir	30	31 8a Men's Breakfast 9a Bible Study 10:15a Juneberry Music

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

COMMITTEE NOTES

COMMUNITY DINNER

Sunday, January 25, at 5:00 pm

Leader: MARCY CHONG (603-448-4042/chonghall@gmail.com)

Please participate in this vital service to our local community! Thanks to Marcy Chong 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 your help, look for sign-ups in the Parish Hall, or contact the church or Marcy directly.

New Year, New Leaders!

We are blessed and grateful to have a consistent group of dedicated church members who generously commit their time and resources to our Community Dinners. But we would love to expand that group! Please consider helping however you can, whether it's just pitching in bag of potatoes, serving and cleaning up, or actually organizing an entire meal.

Below is a list of those who will lead 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 what it involves, please contact the church office.

1/25	Marcy Chong	7/26	(open)
2/22	Women of the Church	8/23	(open)
3/22	John Gilliatt	9/27	Women of the Church
4/26	Christian Education	10/25	Christian Education
5/24	(open)	11/22	(open)
6/28	(open)	12/27	Nan Parsons

Community Dinner Fund Available

The Mission & Social Action Committee and the Treasurer remind the congregation that a fund exists to help subsidize Community Dinner preparation. The fund was established to encourage the provision of more nutritional and (when possible) locally-sourced food for these important dinners.

To request reimbursement from the Community Dinner Fund, Team Leaders should submit receipts and an explanatory note to Treasurer Todd Heatherton.

From the Nominating Committee

Volunteer Opportunities Available!

As we begin the new year—and next month a new term for our volunteer committees—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, contact Barry Schuster (603-448-5937/ivylegal@gmail.com) or Amy Driscoll (603-448-0976/amykdriscoll@gmail.com).

January Meetings

Mission/Social Action and Stewardship	1/4, 11:15
Diaconate	1/12, 7:00
Christian Education	1/14, 7:00
Church Council	1/20, 7:00
Board of Governors	1/25, 11:15

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

COMMITTEE NOTES

CONTENT FOR THE 2014 ANNUAL REPORT

must be submitted
to the Church Administrator by
MONDAY, JANUARY 12

PLEASE NOTE: Church Council and the Ad-Hoc Task Force to review the structure of FCC's committees will be proposing a number of amendments to the By-Laws regarding committee membership. All of these revisions will be made available to the congregation for review by January 18.

2015 ANNUAL MEETING—SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8

The Annual Meeting of the First Congregational Church of Lebanon, NH, will be held in the church sanctuary 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 (*see note at left*).

The Pastoral Perspective, *continued from Page 1*

other opportunities for us to come together in prayer: our gatherings and meetings. Many of our committees and fellowships do this already. I'd like to encourage prayer at all gatherings of the church, for whatever reason, business or pleasure. After all, the reason we come together in corporate form is to praise the one who made us. Prayer can ground us and direct us and should be a part of all we do together.

Finally, dedication. You, the people of First Congregational Church of Lebanon, give generously of yourselves to the common life of our spiritual home. For this I, your pastor, am grateful. As we begin a new calendar year, I hope and pray that we as a community can not only lift up these wonderful gifts of time, skills, and money, but also commit ourselves to making the most faithful and effective use of what is ultimately a finite resource. There is much we want to do. But recognizing that no church can do everything, our call is to determine what is most important for us to do, to dedicate ourselves to the work that will best enable us to respond to Jesus' call to mission and ministry on behalf of the Kingdom of God. We have a framework to guide us in our discernment process goals of growing younger, deeper, and outward, and we have experience from recent years of what most excites, engages, and challenges us to shape our activities going forward.

Traditionally, people make resolutions to begin a new calendar year. And traditionally, those resolutions have as bright a future as Baby New Year's. They are destined to encounter disappointment, disillusionment, and even outright failure. So as we begin 2015, let us take a different way, and follow the star that guided the magi. Instead of making resolutions, let us instead heed a call, embrace a renewed vocation, and faithfully do our best in mutual love and support to follow the way of Jesus.

Yours faithfully,

Steve

THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION

Reflections from El Salvador and Guatemala

On December 7 the Parish Hall filled for a potluck lunch and presentation on two October mission trips supported by our congregation. Deb Scott, dressed in colorful Guatemalan attire, shared compelling stories and video from her medical mission to that country. Participants in the Epilogos-sponsored trip to El Salvador also shared their images and reflections from San Jose Villanueva. Thanks to all mission travelers for bringing our ministry to Central America, and to the entire congregation for supporting them all the way!



With Heart and Soul: Stewardship 2015

Our faithful stewardship—inspired not by a sense of obligation but by a cheerful decision to follow God's own example of giving and serving—enables and enhances everything that we do at FCC. Thanks to all who have already made a commitment to the church's mission and ministry for the new year! To date, we have received 30 pledges for 2015, and we gratefully continue to accept pledges this month.

Offering envelopes for 2015 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.

THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS AT FCC

Steve Silver presents a communion tablecloth sent from San Jose Villanueva in El Salvador; families take turns offering Advent readings; congregants enjoy the fellowship of holiday coffee hour. On Christmas Eve, Amy Driscoll, Rachel Silver, and Anna Perritt directed a superb children's pageant, and three Heathertons served admirably as regal magi following the star.



THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION



OUR LOCAL MISSION

SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY!!

No, that's not a typo, and we're not talking about football. Once again we're "tackling" hunger in our local community with a soup collection on the first two weekends in February. Please leave your cans of soup in the collection boxes in the Narthex and Parish Hall, and we'll distribute them to Headrest, Listen Community Services, and the Upper Valley Haven. (Donations will be accepted the week of February 1-8.)

Thanks for your generosity!

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 more details and registration materials,
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).

Local Interdisciplinary Geriatric Homecare Team



LIGHT PROVIDES PARTICIPANTS WITH THE FOLLOWING:

- Person- and family-centered care
- Health assessment and education
- Individualized care plans developed by interdisciplinary team
- Resource information and referral
- Coordination with primary-care teams and community agencies
- Service provided without insurance or other payments

LIGHT MISSION STATEMENT:

Our mission is to provide respectful, proactive, person-centered care to older adults in our region. We will accomplish this by partnering with our clients' medical team and with other agencies that serve them. LIGHT will seek to provide a community-focused, best-practice safety net to assist older adults who wish to remain in their homes.

The LIGHT team consists of a team coordinator, an outreach worker, and a wellness nurse. **For more information, please contact Jane Conklin at 603-448-1835 or jconklin@gcsc.org.**

CALLED TO CARE

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 (mrlandmrs.j@comcast.net / 802-296-8251) or Steve Silver.

MUSIC AT THE MEETINGHOUSE



The Messiah Comes to FCC—Just in Time for Christmas!

Approximately 80 singers, filling the front half of the Sanctuary, delighted in a traditional holiday sing-along of Handel's beloved oratorio *The Messiah*. A healthy audience occupied the rest of the pews, and all enjoyed a parade of soloists (mostly voice students of organizers Jennifer Hansen and Julie Ness), along with the heroic accompaniment of FCC's own Henry Danaher on piano.



JUNEBERRY MUSIC

Choral Singing School

Do you like to sing? Do you want to improve vocal skills and sing in a choir without performance pressure? Would you like to connect with others and even improve your health in a choral setting?

Get out of the shower and into the choir!

Founded in 2012, Juneberry Music's Choral Singing School helps people of all ages and backgrounds develop choral singing skills in a fun, affordable way. We welcome you wherever you are, whether completely inexperienced and untrained or more comfortable and ready to challenge yourself. We'll help you reach your choral singing goals—or simply discover what those goals are!

Participants in this 10-week choral class encounter music from across centuries and cultures, while gaining the skills and confidence to sing in church choirs, community choruses, and other groups.

Meeting in the Parlor on Saturday Mornings, 10:15-12:30 (Final Class in Thetford, VT)

Winter Term: January 10 through March 7 / Spring Term: March 21 through May 16

Cost—\$90 for 10-week Session

For more information or to register, contact Director Patricia Norton (juneberrymusic@gmail.com/802-785-4740) or visit www.juneberrymusic.com.

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