



Grace Notes

The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

What's Inside

Advent Scenes8-9



New Members9



Sunday Service.....2
 Transportation Ministry.....2
 January Calendar3
 Committee Notes.....4-7
Annual Meeting Warrant.....5
Boycott/Divest Response.....6
 Stewardship 20167
 Our Local Mission10
 Music at the Meetinghouse....11

The Pastoral Perspective

This month, on the second Sunday (January 10), we move worship from the Sanctuary to the Parish Hall. There we will gather each week until Palm Sunday. This change of venue has practical aspects: we will save thousands of dollars by not heating a very large space during the coldest time of the year, and we will be better stewards of the environment by not using thousands of gallons of oil. But what appeals to me most about the change is an expression of our faith. Moving from the Sanctuary to the Parish Hall can be for us a form of pilgrimage, a journey to a different place and different way of being. How is this possible, you might wonder, if we are merely shifting our service from one room to another?

A good place to answer this question is with the word “merely.” When we move into the Parish Hall, we make conscious choices, from the way we set up the chairs to how we share the children’s moment. Everything is different. And it is in this difference that we can experience worship and being with God in new ways. That, in turn, enables our faith to take on new shape and head off in unexpected directions.

For this to happen, though, we need to set aside “merely” not only as a word but as a mode of thinking, one that focuses on limits and what we cannot do. Instead, we need to embrace a perspective that envisions possibility, that even dreams of the impossible. Perhaps that may seem like a lot to ask, but consider why we are gathering for worship in the first place: to come before the God who has come to us in Jesus Christ. When we come to church, we lift up words in song and prayer, open our hearts in friendship and caring, offer our hands in service and fellowship in response to the amazing, wondrous, creative, reconciling God who is anything but a “merely” God. The God we come to meet on Sunday mornings is the One who appeared in the world as an infant and who died on a cross so that we might live. Our God is the One who did and continues to do mighty and magnificent things—and calls us as followers of Jesus to do likewise.

Continued on Page 8

SUNDAY SERVICE

WORSHIP IN THE PARISH HALL
Sundays, January 10 *through* March 13

Participate in Worship

Serve as a Liturgist or Greeter/Usher

Ever wonder how your friends ended up handing out bulletins, delivering the call to worship and reading scripture from the lectern, or walking gracefully from pew to pew collecting the offering?

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

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

If you'd like to serve as either a liturgist or a greeter/usher, contact the church office.

Worship Transportation *A Congregational Service*

Some members of our congregation, for various reasons, have difficulty getting to Sunday worship on their own. Many others of us have plenty of room in our cars and could easily offer rides. It's time to get these two groups together!

If you need assistance getting to church on Sunday mornings, or if you're willing to give a ride to someone else who does, please contact the Church Administrator.

Our congregational life will be all the richer for this small but vital ministry!

Queued for Coffee Hour

January—Stewardship Committee

February—Christian Education Committee

March—Diaconate

COMMUNITY DINNER

Sunday, January 24, 5:00 pm

Leaders: BARB AND BRUCE LARO

Please participate in this vital service to our neighbors! Thanks to the Laros for leading this month's effort—let's support them by donating food, serving, and cleaning up.

Look for sign-ups in the Parish Hall.

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

New Year, New Leaders!

We are grateful to have a consistent group of dedicated folks who generously commit time and resources to our Community Dinners.

We would love to expand that group!

Please consider organizing a meal in the new year. There are menu resources available to support you, and the church's Community Dinner Fund can help cover any costs.

Below are our dinner dates in 2016, and we still need leaders for the latter half. If you are interested or have questions about this role, please contact the church office.

January 24	Barb and Bruce Laro
February 28	Erin Slayton
March 27	John Gilliatt
April 24	Christian Education
May 22	Women of the Church
June 26	Mission & Social Action
July 24	(open)
August 28	(open)
September 25	Women of the Church
October 23	Christian Education
November 27	(open)
December 25	(open)

JANUARY 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27 10a Worship and Church School No Board of Governors 5p Community Dinner	28	29 7p Boy Scouts	30 6p UVPRN	31 No Handbells No Choir	1 NEW YEAR'S DAY	2 8a Men's Breakfast
3 10a Worship (Communion) and Church School 11:15a MSA	4 3p WCBH After-School Group 5:30p Cub Scouts (Tigers) 6:15p Cub Scouts (Bears)	5 5:45p Cub Scouts (Wolves) 7p Boy Scouts	6 11a Memorial Svc for Maurice Bergeron 6p UVPRN	7 6p Handbells 7p Choir	8	9 10a Juneberry Music School (first class of winter session)
10 10a Worship and Church School <i>Please Note: We will worship in the Parish Hall from this date until Palm Sunday, March 20.</i>	11 5:30p Cub Scouts (Tigers) 6:15p Cub Scouts (Bears) 7p Diaconate	12 5:45p Cub Scouts (Wolves) 7p Boy Scouts	13 8a-4p NH-WIC 6p UVPRN 7p Christian Ed Committee	14 9:30a-4p Grafton-Orange-Sullivan Assn 6p Handbells 6:30p UVIP Exec Council 7p Choir	15 ANNUAL REPORT CONTENT DUE	16 10a Juneberry Music School
17 10a Worship and Church School	18 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., DAY	19 11:30a UVIP Recruiting Lunch 7p Church Council 7p Boy Scouts/Troop Committee	20 6p UVPRN	21 6p Handbells 7p Choir	22 6-9p Leb Rec Dept Quilters FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER CONTENT DUE	23 10a Juneberry Music School 10a-5p Leb Rec Dept Quilters
24 10a Worship and Church School 11:15a Bd of Govs 5p Community Dinner <hr/> 31 10a Worship and Church School	25 10a-7p NH-WIC	26 7p Boy Scouts	27 6p UVPRN	28 6p Handbells 7p Choir	29	30 10a Juneberry Music School

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

COMMITTEE NOTES

CHURCH COUNCIL

At December's Council meeting, Jon Scott reported for **Stewardship** that the pledge process had brought just a few more pledges than last year, with a similar total pledged. However, he pointed out that we've received pledges from a somewhat different mix of people, including some who, despite faithful giving, haven't typically pledged in past years. To support this progress, he urged committee chairs to remind their members to pledge.

Jon also noted that many had made specific **commitments of service and volunteer hours**, in addition to financial pledges. And expanding on a Diaconate discussion, he observed the need to assist some members with transportation to worship and other events.

Barry Schuster invited suggestions in support of the **Nominating Committee** process, in advance of the Annual Meeting in February. Any comments should go either to him or chair Amy Driscoll.

Brian Clancy noted for the **Music Committee** that Henry Danaher was well into his organ study with Diane Belcher at St. Thomas in Hanover. He again thanked the Council and those individuals who had directly supported the costs of this study program.

Reporting for the Diaconate, Susan Montmagny offered congratulations to the six adults (and a baby!) who were set to join the church as **new covenant members** on December 20. The group met with members

of the Diaconate and Pastor Steve Silver the previous Sunday, and Susan reported that each new member had expressed gratitude for how welcoming and supportive congregation members had been since their first visits to church.

Jon Scott distributed a summary statement draft from the Deacons, outlining a **response to the UCC's resolutions advocating boycott and divestment** from companies doing business in the West Bank. Despite their intention to affirm human rights and the Middle East peace process, the resolutions can be perceived as hostile to Israel in tone. Jon explained that aside from the problematic substance of the resolutions, the process by which they were brought forward and approved seemed unduly one-sided, disregarding the possibility that individual churches might hold different or opposing views.

Deacons are concerned that the resolutions, which presume to speak for all UCC member churches, can be wrongly interpreted and inhibit FCC's efforts to build relationships with local Jewish congregations.

Barry Schuster asked how our church might best present this response, emphasizing the need for congregational review and discussion outside the Diaconate. In particular, the resolutions themselves should be more widely available; Barry also wondered if other UCC churches had responded similarly. All agreed that congregational review was vital, and that distributing some version of the statement in January, in

bulletins and the newsletter, could effectively initiate the conversation. In the near term, Jon suggested that Steve Silver could at least convey to UCC leadership that we have concerns about the resolutions.

Following a fruitful congregational discussion in November about our **communion serving process**, the Diaconate continues to consider how best to accommodate varying preferences for both the intinction process and the distribution of the elements in the pews. When we worship in the Parish Hall during winter months, distribution is the only practical method, but in the Sanctuary, it's possible we will alternate methods from month to month. Steve Silver commended the tenor of the conversation on communion, in which people had shared differing views in a caring, faithful, and respectful way.

In his pastor's report, Steve noted a good Ecumenical Thanksgiving service and very busy Advent so far. Attendance at worship has been strong, including some new people and some who had returned after being away for a time. He also explained the different format for this year's Blue Christmas service, a smaller, contemplative time for communion and reflection.

DIACONATE

In December the Deacons heard an update from Susan Montmagny on the offering collection process. Several deacons have participated with her in using the new process

COMMITTEE NOTES

and tally form, but more deacons are urged to participate. It was noted that the Deacon of the Month has the responsibility to collect and process the collection with another deacon.

The Church Administrator has asked the Deacons for help in determining whether to include particular individuals in the new church directory. He distributed a list of names in question.

Several Deacons reported on their experience leading worship services at Genesis. The Diaconate agreed to offer services again in the future; Steve Silver will pursue this option.

Jon Scott reported on his efforts to enhance our Facebook presence. He noted that even a rather modest increase in using the page for church communications over the past few months, by Steve Silver and others, has more than doubled our Facebook "fans." We unfortunately have to spend money for people to see what we're posting, but Jon compared that expense to the cost of newspaper ads that we already purchase. He recommends that we continue to pay for promoted posts and find others in the congregation to help with content for our page.

Steve Teeter reported on the work of UVIP, making reference to an article in the previous Sunday's *Valley News*. The UVIP Economic Justice Committee distributed information at the Claremont and West Lebanon Walmart stores. The group has also discussed the Black Lives Matter movement. Carolin Bassett has joined Steve and Ron

CONTENT FOR THE 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

must be submitted to the Church Administrator by
Friday, January 15

ANNUAL MEETING 2016

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14, AT 11:15 AM

The Annual Meeting of First Congregational Church of Lebanon, NH, will be held in the Parish Hall on Sunday, February 14, 2016, 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.

*From Church Council and the
Nominating Committee*

Are You Being Served?

Have you found your ideal service opportunity at FCC?
Have you considered working on a new program or committee?
Do you have creative ideas for our congregational governance?

We want to know!

If you're interested in serving or learning more about an FCC program or committee, please contact the church office or **Amy Driscoll (603-448-0976 or amykdriscoll@gmail.com)**.

January Meetings

Mission/Social Action and Stewardship	1/3, 11:15
Diaconate	1/11, 7:00
Christian Education	1/13, 7:00
Church Council	1/19, 7:00
Board of Governors	1/24, 11:15

February Meetings

Mission/Social Action and Stewardship	2/7, 11:15
Diaconate	2/8, 7:00
Christian Education	2/10, 7:00
Church Council	2/16, 7:00
Board of Governors	2/28, 11:15

2016 ANNUAL MEETING
Sunday, February 14, 11:15

COMMITTEE NOTES

Bailey to represent our church in UVIP; she will be working on its Committee on Aging.

The Deacons also followed up the discussion on communion serving practices. While there is general agreement on serving communion by distribution of elements when we worship in the Parish Hall, the Deacons hope to reach a decision about Sanctuary practices at their next meeting.

Biff Simpson suggested that we consider showing family-friendly movies in the Parish Hall during the winter months, and all thought this a great idea. Biff will supply a list of possible movies at the next Diaconate meeting, and the group will discuss logistics.

In his closing prayer, Steve Silver recognized the third anniversary of the Sandy Hook school shootings.

Community Dinner Fund Available

The Mission & Social Action Committee reminds us that a fund exists to help subsidize preparation of Community Dinners. This fund was created to encourage the provision of more nutritional and (where possible) locally-sourced food for these important meals.

To request reimbursement from the Community Dinner Fund, leaders should submit receipts and an explanatory note to the church office.

The UCC “Boycott and Divest” Resolutions:

How will First Congregational Church of Lebanon respond?

In 2014-15 both the NH Conference and the General Synod of the United Church of Christ (UCC) passed strongly-worded resolutions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, calling on the UCC and its member churches to “boycott and divest” from companies doing business in the West Bank. **First Congregational Church of Lebanon did not endorse or vote on these resolutions**, and our Diaconate, following extensive study and prayer, recommends that FCC formally take a position in response, as we are free to do within our congregational governance structure.

Our discussions within the Diaconate raised serious concerns with both the **substance** of these resolutions and the **process** by which they were adopted. We also believe that in the absence of a formal position taken by FCC, others in our community and region may wrongly assume that UCC passage of the resolutions means that we and all other UCC congregations support them, too. This misperception is harmful to our relations with the public and other faith communities, particularly the Jewish community in the Upper Valley. Regardless of the intent of the “boycott and divest” resolutions, we have seen that they impair our ability to engage in important interfaith dialogue with our Jewish brothers and sisters.

Call to Action: The Diaconate adopted a draft statement opposing the “boycott and divest” resolutions and has brought its recommendations to Church Council, based in part on these core principles:

- We believe we are called to offer a different witness on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict than that communicated by recent UCC and NH Conference actions.
- We believe that the best future for all residents of the Middle East is a peaceful future.
- We believe that peace and justice in the Middle East must be pursued in ways that do not promote anti-Semitism at home or abroad.
- We believe that the UCC should take an active role in promoting peace in the Middle East—as peacemakers, not partisans. UCC peacemakers should work with and encourage both sides; we should act in ways that promote and bring about real change for good.
- We believe that partisan resolutions like those adopted by the NH Conference and the UCC can make peace harder to achieve, by alienating Jews and Israelis and enabling some Palestinians to believe they do not need to negotiate for peace.

Finding Our Hearts: Stewardship 2016

“Time, talent, and treasure” is a common way of describing stewardship. It’s a familiar but misleading formula, suggesting that time and talent are not treasures like money. But how we spend our time and make use of our talents—like how we invest our financial resources—is an expression of our faith, of where our hearts can be found. By participating fully in the ministry of stewardship, each of us has the opportunity to “store up treasures in heaven,” to make a place in our hearts for God’s grace and love. Our faithful stewardship enables and enhances everything that we do at FCC.

Thus far we are grateful to have received over 30 pledges for this year, some from members of our congregation who are pledging for the first time.

Thank you for your prayerful, honest consideration of your commitment to our church’s mission and ministry in 2016.

* * *

New offering envelopes are available in the Parish Hall. Once you’ve submitted a pledge form, please take whichever box you wish and record your name and number on the list.

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 collection serves a distinct purpose:

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

Communion offering—Collected every first Sunday of the month, directly supporting the Diaconate’s Open-Door Fund for community assistance (gas and grocery cards and other assistance) or occasionally designated for a specific mission need.

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, THANKS TO ALL for so generously and consistently supporting this diversity of purposes, here at FCC and far beyond!

“Boycott and Divest” Resolutions, *continued*

The Diaconate therefore recommends that the First Congregational Church of Lebanon offer a public witness opposing these resolutions. We must state that they do not speak for our church.

With support from our congregation, we would allow our Diaconate, Pastor, and other church leaders to communicate our witness to our brothers and sisters in the Jewish community, including the Upper Valley Jewish Community, Dartmouth College Hillel, and Congregation Shir Shalom in Woodstock; to other UCC churches in NH and VT; to the Grafton-Orange-Sullivan Association, the NH Conference, and the UCC itself; and to the public via articles, editorial letters, and statements on our web site.

QUESTIONS? The Diaconate plans to lead a congregational dialogue on this important issue in the near future, and it welcomes questions at any time. The resolutions themselves will also be available for review as part of this process. We look forward to hearing your comments, concerns, and opinions.

THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION



The Pastoral Perspective, *continued from Page 1*

Which brings us back to the Parish Hall. My hope and my prayer is that as we move through Epiphany and into Lent, each of us and all of us will live into the blessing of pilgrimage, that we will enjoy the trip, savor each moment, and give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to lead us forward. Perhaps, we will see not only the particular room in which we worship but all the world around us with new eyes, new hope, and new faith.

Yours faithfully,

Steve

THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS AT FCC

Previous page: story time at a children's moment; the children's choir proudly sings *The Friendly Beasts*; caroling at Valley Terrace; the Ryder/Henken family leads Advent liturgy; warm fellowship, favorite carols, and great food at the Parsonage. This page: our annual pageant on Christmas Eve, featuring an exceptional cast (with Coby Mason and his mother Nicole as Jesus and Mary!).



Welcome, New Members!

On December 20, as we prepared to welcome the Christ child, our congregation joyfully welcomed six new covenant members: (left to right) Kathy Beckett, Mary-Thérèse Braun, Brandon and Nicole Mason, Larry Doyle, and (not pictured) Jo Shelnett.

We're so glad you each have made this commitment to join our church family!

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 community with a soup collection in the first two weeks of February. We'll distribute all that we can collect to Headrest, Listen Community Services, and the Upper Valley Haven.

Please look for collection boxes in the Parish Hall; donations accepted from January 31 to February 14.

THANKS FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

Prepared to Serve 2016

NH Conference, UCC

Saturday, February 20, 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 2/12, \$50 until 2/18, \$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.

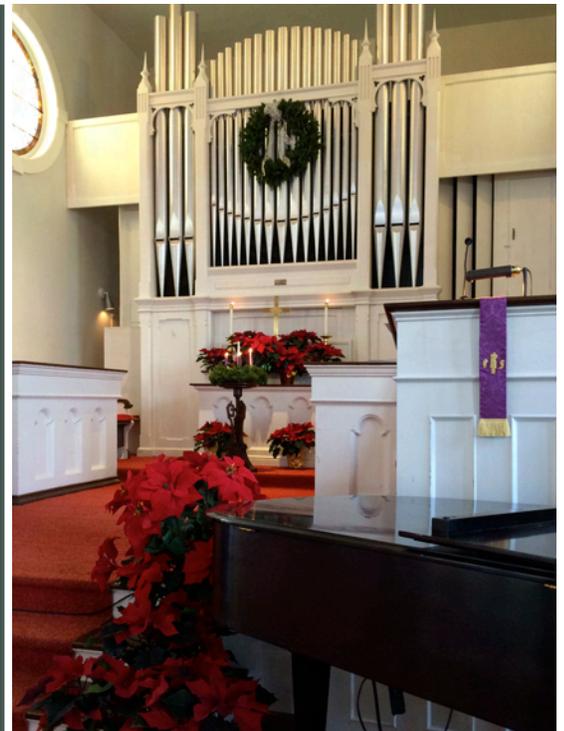
Now with just eight caregivers, **Called to Care** needs help! If the Spirit moves you to join this rewarding group, please contact Linda Jacobs (mrandsr.j@comcast.net / 802-296-8251) or Steve Silver.

The "Nearly New" Christmas Sale!

*Too many Christmas decorations? Trying to downsize?
The Women of the Church have just the answer!*

As you put away those Christmas decorations this year, set aside your extras for this special event in December. We're offering a chance to sell your extra decorations; you'll keep a portion of your sales for yourself (a little extra cash for the holidays!), and the rest goes to one of FCC's mission projects. The only requirement is that items be in fairly good condition (something you'd buy if it didn't belong to you!). And if you have friends who would like to participate, they are welcome.

We hope to make this a fun, successful day for the WOC, the congregation, and the community. For questions, contact Corrine Erskine at 603-448-3919 or cerskine2@yahoo.com.



MUSIC AT THE MEETINGHOUSE



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

Saturday Mornings at FCC, January 9 through March 5

First Class 10:15-11:30, Skills Class 11:15-12:30 / Final session in Thetford, Sunday, March 6

\$90 for full ten-week course, \$12 for drop-in per session

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

10TH BIENNIAL LEBANON-AREA CHOIR FESTIVAL

Sunday, March 6, at 4:00 pm—FCC Sanctuary

Combined Choirs Rehearsal 2:00, Individual Choir Rehearsals 3:00, Full Concert 4:00

All are cordially invited to this biennial celebration of church choral music in the Upper Valley! Area choirs will each sing their own pieces before joining together—around sixty voices in all—for a memorable program directed by Hal Sheeler. Music of Felix Mendelssohn, Stephen Paulus, Moses Hogan, John Rutter, Stephen Schwartz, and many, many others!

Participating churches include First Congregational Church of Lebanon, the Lebanon United Methodist Church, Canaan United Methodist Church, West Lebanon Congregational Church, and other Upper Valley congregations. FCC's own Henry Danaher will accompany on piano and organ.

A free-will offering will be received in support of Listen and the Upper Valley Haven.

PLEASE JOIN US—ALL ARE WELCOME!

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



First Congregational Church of Lebanon

10 South Park Street

PO Box 230

Lebanon, NH 03766

*DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY*

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED