

Grace Notes

The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

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The Pastoral Perspective

The Magi, according to the Gospel of Matthew, traveled from the East and were guided by a star to the infant Jesus. We know little about these visitors: their ages, nationality, even their number all remain a mystery to us. That hasn't stopped people from trying to fill in the blanks. Tradition tells us that the Magi were kings, of whom there were three, by the names of Balthazar, Melchior, and Gaspar.

But what is "tradition?" In the Church, it's "the process of handing on Christian faith and practice," or so says the *Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* at the beginning of an entry that takes up about one and one half large pages in miniscule type. We might think of tradition as the accumulated beliefs and actions that shape the way we do and tell things. Some streams of Christianity invest tradition with more importance and standing than others. Some traditions are putatively shared by all members of a denomination, others by a single church. The bottom line, though, is that tradition is part of what we do and who we are.

One of the upshots of this is that we need to be mindful of why we follow traditions and why they have so much power for us. Tradition can be a wonderful thing, reinforcing our faith and helping us better understand things that are hard to comprehend. But tradition can also be a crutch, used to continue what has always been done, simply because that is the way things have been. It can buttress the power of insiders, those who were here first and lay claim to a special knowledge. Length of practice and commitment are not in question here; slavish deference and unwarranted devotion are. The truth is that then we stop seeing with fresh eyes, we are in danger of being blind to what is going on around us.

Personally, I like tradition. It is grounding and comforting. It allows me to be in communion with other Christians, both those who are alive today and those who have come before. Tradition gives me a sense of being part of something larger than myself. But I am aware that it can be all too easy to do things a certain way simply because "that's the way it's always been" or "that's how we've always done it." If we adhere to tradition, we must ever be conscious of why we do so.

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SUNDAY SERVICE

WORSHIP IN THE PARISH HALL

Sundays, January 14 *through* March 18

2018 Annual Meeting and Potluck

Sunday, February 11—Following Worship

THE SOUPER BOWL IS COMING!!

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 early February. We'll distribute all that we can collect to Headrest, Listen Community Services, and the Upper Valley Haven.

Donations accepted from January 28 to February 11; please look for the collection boxes in the Parish Hall.

THANKS FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

FEBRUARY 4 IS SCOUT SUNDAY

For years our church has proudly served as the host and charter organization for Boy Scout Troop 279 and Cub Scout Pack 279, offering them meeting space throughout the year. Next month we will recognize this faithful relationship by inviting the scouts to join us and participate in worship.

Please plan to attend and support Scouting!

New Members Welcome!

Have you worshiped with us a few times? Have you found a welcoming, spiritually nourishing church home here? If so, we warmly invite you to join our community of faith as a covenant member.

If you would like to learn more about this invitation, please speak with Rev. Steve Silver or contact the church office.

COMMUNITY DINNER

Sunday, January 28, 5:00 pm

We are still confirming who will lead this month's dinner effort, but all are welcome to lend a hand as we provide this vital service to our neighbors. Please look for sign-ups in the Parish Hall.

New Year, New Leaders!

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

We would love to expand that group!

Please consider organizing a meal in 2018. Menu resources are available, and a Community Dinner Fund helps cover costs. Below are the dates that are available for 2018. If you're interested in leading or have questions, contact the office.

| | |
|-------------|-------------|
| January 28 | May 27 |
| February 25 | June 24 |
| March 25 | July 22 |
| April 22 | November 25 |

Participate in Worship!

Serve as a Liturgist or Greeter/Usher

Would you like to greet the congregation and hand out bulletins on Sunday morning? Or deliver the call to worship and read scripture? Or light the altar candles? Or collect the offering?

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, please contact the church office.

Queued for Coffee Hour

January—Stewardship Committee
February—Christian Education Committee
March—Diaconate

JANUARY 2018

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| 31 10a Worship and Church School | 1 NEW YEAR'S DAY | 2 7p Boy Scouts | 3 5:30p Cub Scout Pack Committee 6p UVPRN | 4 7p Choir | 5 | 6 8a Men's Breakfast |
| 7 10a Worship (w/ Communion) and Church School | 8 5:45p Cub Scouts (Bears/Wolves) 7p Diaconate | 9 7p Boy Scouts | 10 8a-4p NH-WIC 6p UVPRN 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers 7:15p Christian Ed Committee | 11 12:30-4p G-O-S Assn CoCM 7p Choir | 12 Annual Report Content Due | 13 1-3p VT Workers Ctr Presentation (New Poor People's Campaign) |
| 14 10a Worship and Church School <i>Please Note: We will worship in the Parish Hall from today until Palm Sunday, March 25.</i> | 15 MLK DAY | 16 7p Church Council 7p Boy Scouts/Troop Committee | 17 6p UVPRN 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers | 18 7p Choir | 19 6-9p Leb Rec Dept Quilters | 20 10a-5p Leb Rec Dept Quilters |
| 21 10a Worship and Church School | 22 | 23 7p Boy Scouts | 24 6p UVPRN 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers | 25 10a-6p NH-WIC 7p Choir | 26 | 27 3p Cantabile: Sacred Winter |
| 28 10a Worship and Church School 11:15a Bd of Gvs 3p Open Sing V: Vaughan Williams 5p Community Dinner | 29 5:45p Cub Scouts (Bears/Wolves) | 30 7p Boy Scouts | 31 6p UVPRN 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers | 1 7p Choir | 2 | 3 8a Men's Breakfast |

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

COMMITTEE NOTES

DIACONATE

At their December meeting, the Deacons discussed FCC's role in the **Community Nursing Project**, for which Barb Teeter and Alyson Danyew-Ellison attended a recent planning meeting. Our church is a program sponsor, and Barb and Alyson serve as board members; there is no financial obligation. The question is how we identify those who need the program's help, and what Barb and Alyson's responsibilities will be.

In our **Ministry of Caring**, several older members of the congregation were suggested to receive Christmas cards from the children in Church School, and a few more potential recipients for prayer shawls were identified. Deacons agree on the need for a more structured approach for prayer requests, and we would like to establish a website link to receive and follow prayer requests. The challenge would be how to access the site in a mobile format. Revisiting the Sunday afternoon **services at Genesis**, it was noted that a dedicated group of Deacons made these successful. Having met with the recreational director, Kathy Beckett confirmed that a simpler service format is best, although

the time of the services cannot be changed. Genesis has its own large-print songbooks, but residents need assistance finding pages and seeing text clearly. As for how often FCC can offer to run the services, it was agreed that two months would be feasible, preferably May and November.

In his **pastor's report**, Steve Silver clarified plans for services during Advent and Christmas Eve; the Teeters offered to serve communion at the 11:00 candlelight service. He also noted the December 17 prayer forum and plans for a prayer email box. And in addition to his usual participation in wider-church activities, Steve will be joining the Life-care Board at APD.

Barb Jones and Steve also attended a training session for how to handle an active shooter in church. While this remains quite unlikely, we must accept that it could happen and be as prepared as possible. We need to balance security and hospitality; one question, for example, regards whether and when to lock our doors on Sunday mornings. Steve will be reporting more fully on this issue when Council next meets.

The Deacons will meet next on January 8 at the Woodlands.

January Meetings

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Mission/Social Action | 1/7, 11:15 |
| Diaconate | 1/8, 7:00 |
| Christian Education | 1/10, 7:15 |
| Church Council | 1/16, 7:00 |
| Board of Governors | 1/28, 11:15 |

February Meetings

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Mission/Social Action | 2/4, 11:15 |
| 2018 ANNUAL MTG | 2/11, 11:15 |
| Diaconate | 2/12, 7:00 |
| Christian Education | (no mtg) |
| Church Council | 2/20, 7:00 |
| Board of Governors | 2/25, 11:15 |

*From Church Council and the
Nominating Committee*

Are You Being Served?

Have you found an ideal service opportunity for yourself at FCC? Are you interested in a particular program or committee? Do you have creative ideas for aspects of congregational life or governance?

We want to know!

Please contact the church office or Amy Driscoll (603-448-0976 or amykdriscoll@gmail.com).

Giving in Community: Sharing God's Gifts with One Another

Our stewardship theme for 2018 comes from Acts 4-5, with its stories of remarkable sharing and shocking selfishness. Giving, lying, trust, community—the early church dealt with all these issues, and we can draw lessons for our own stewardship and engagement with the church, as individuals and as a community.

Please consider your commitment, prayerfully and honestly, to our church's ministry in 2018.

Offering envelopes for 2018 are available in the Parish Hall. Once you've submitted a pledge form, please take whichever box you wish and record it on the accompanying list.

COMMITTEE NOTES

PLEASE NOTE THAT CONTENT FOR THE
2017 ANNUAL REPORT
is due to the Church Administrator by
Friday, January 12

FCC Annual Meeting 2018 **Sunday, February 11, 11:15 am**

The Annual Meeting of First Congregational Church of Lebanon, NH, will be held in the Parish Hall on Sunday, February 11, 2018, 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.

Tools for Aging with Dignity

Tuesdays, 10:30-12:00, January 16 to February 13
Lebanon United Methodist Church

All seniors and their families are invited to participate in this five-week curriculum, developed by UVIP and led by trained facilitators Sharon Parker and Jodi Austin. You will learn how to organize your affairs, stay active and connected, and plan for a time when you may not be able to advocate for yourself in important decisions.

Materials Fee: \$15. For questions, more details, and registration, contact Barb Jones or Sharon Parker (parker.nh@gmail.com/603-863-7348)

PREPARED TO SERVE 2018

Saturday, February 24, 8:00 to 3:30
Pembroke Academy, Pembroke, NH

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

FEE: \$40 ONLINE THROUGH 2/20, \$50 AT THE DOOR
(Includes resources, breakfast, and lunch.)

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

The Pastoral Perspective, *continued from Page 1*

So, about those Magi...

Complete and trusting faith in God is a critical part of being a Christian. But after that faith come reason and thought, which are also gifts from God. Sometimes, these can take the form of "filling in the blanks," as with the names of the visitors from the East, making things seem more real. True, we want to know more, we need to know more. But ultimately, there is at the heart of the universe a great mystery known to us as the incarnation. We celebrate that on Epiphany, as a nameless, indeterminate number of people from some unknown place bear homage to the Christ child. We do so with gladness, faith, and gratitude.

God is with us, Emmanuel, even if we can't explain his presence and what has happened. Our faith, our tradition, tells us so. Thanks be to God!

Yours faithfully,

Steve

THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS 2017

A busy December brought caroling at Harvest Hill, Genesis, and Lebanon Towers; merriment and warmth at the Parsonage; a host of enthusiastic readers, candle-lighters, and pageant characters; and a delicious, generously abundant midday Community Dinner served on Christmas Eve.



THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION



The New Poor People's Campaign

A Presentation by the VT Workers' Center
Saturday, January 13, 1:00-3:00 pm, Parish Hall

All are invited to learn more about this initiative for social change and "moral revival," inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King's lifelong advocacy for unity and justice.

Lunch and childcare provided. For more details, please call 802-281-3057 or email uppervalley@workerscenter.org.

Christmas Greetings from El Salvador!

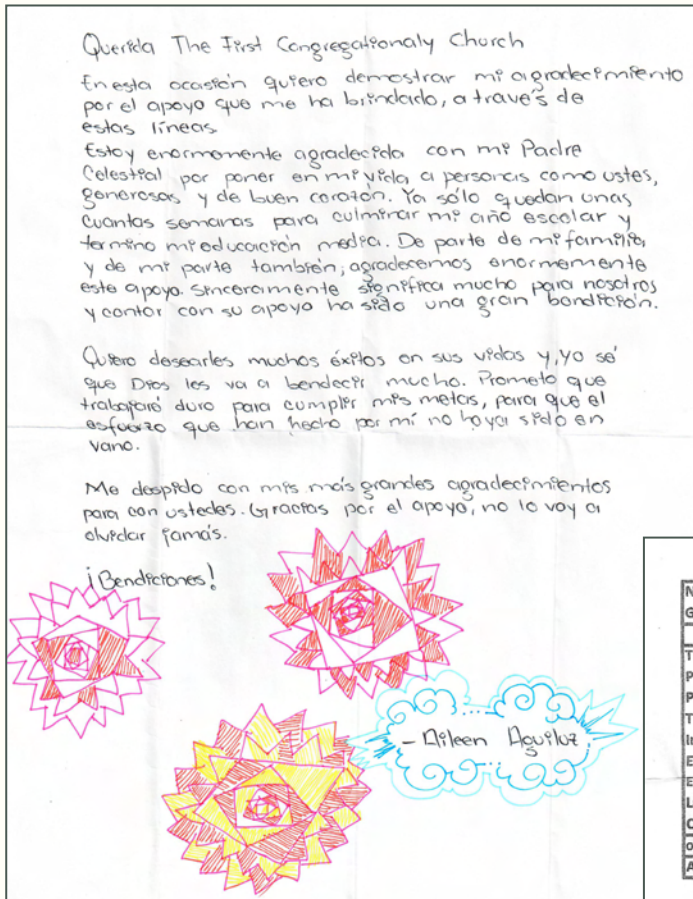
Last month we received another letter from Aileen Aguiluz (aileenmartir@yahoo.com), the young student whom our Church School has supported with scholarship funds from the Lenten Lunch Bag offering. Aileen once again enclosed a copy of her school transcript—along with a delightfully drawn Christmas card this time! We certainly wish Aileen all the best as she progresses in her studies. (Translation by the editor.)

San Jose Villanueva
December 2017

Dear First Congregational Church,

On this occasion, I wish to show my gratitude for the support that you have offered me, through these few lines.

I'm enormously grateful to my Heavenly Father for placing generous and good-hearted people such as you in my life. I have only a few weeks left to finish my school year and my secondary education. On behalf of both my family and myself, we thank you tremendously for this support. Truly, it means so



| | | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|---|----------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Martes 05 de septiembre de 2017 | | | Complejo Educativo Católico San José Villanueva | | | |
| Nombre: Aguiluz Martir, Aileen Aracely | | | Periodo: 3 | | NIE: 363190 Turno: MAÑANA | |
| GRADO: TERCER AÑO | | | Opción: TECNICO | | Año: 2017 Sección: A | |
| Nombre de Materias | 30% Act. | 30% Het. | 40% Obj. | Promedio | Resul. | Nombre Profesor |
| Tecnología III | 10,00 | 10,00 | 9,00 | 9,60 | Apro. | Victor Estrada |
| Practica III | 9,00 | 9,00 | 9,00 | 9,00 | Apro. | Victor Estrada |
| Practica Profesional | 9,00 | 7,00 | 9,40 | 8,56 | Apro. | Roxana Díaz |
| Trabajo de Graduacion | 9,00 | 9,00 | 9,00 | 9,00 | Apro. | Victor Estrada |
| Informatica | 10,00 | 10,00 | 10,00 | 10,00 | Apro. | Saúl Renderos |
| Educ. en la Fé. | 9,00 | 9,00 | 9,00 | 9,00 | Apro. | Pbro. Gonzalo Ortega |
| Educ. Fisica. | 7,00 | 7,00 | 10,00 | 8,20 | Apro. | Antonio Chicas |
| Lab. De Creatividad. | 10,00 | 9,50 | 9,00 | 9,45 | Apro. | Roxana Díaz |
| Conducta | 8,00 | 8,00 | 8,00 | 8,00 | Apro. | Roxana Díaz |
| Observaciones Generales. | | | | | Su Promedio | |
| Asistencia | | | | | (CUM) es: | |
| Inasistencia | | | | | 8,98 | |

much to us, and to rely on your support has been a great blessing.

I wish you all great success in your lives, and I know that God will bless you much. I promise to work hard to fulfill my goals, so that the effort you've made for me will not have been in vain.

I say goodbye with my greatest thanks to you for your support. I will never forget it.

Blessings!

Aileen Aguiluz



MUSIC AT THE MEETINGHOUSE



**Music
at the
Meetinghouse**

MID-WINTER CONCERTS

All in the Sanctuary, FCC

Cantabile Women's Chorus: Sacred Winter—Saturday, January 27, 3:00 pm

Now in its 18th year and directed by Kathy Sherlock-Green, this superb women's ensemble returns to FCC with wintry and warm music by Edward Elgar, Gabriel Fauré, Ola Gjeilo, Franz Schubert, Eric Whitacre, and others. *Admission \$15 adults, \$10 seniors, \$5 students, under 12 free; more at www.cantabilewomen.org.*

Open Sing V: The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams—Sunday, January 28, 3:00 pm

Henry Danaher and Hal Sheeler lead another community choral event with Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Dona Nobis Pacem* and *Five English Folk Songs*. Come join the chorus (scores available) or just listen! *Free.*

Kindness & Cruelty: Willa Cather in Jaffrey—Saturday, February 10, 7:00 pm

Former FCC music director Will Ogmundson and Tom Dunn present this new musical, a three-woman show about author Willa Cather that will have its off-Broadway premiere ten days later! *Suggested donation \$10.*

Classicopia: Songs of Love—Weekend of February 16-18 (DATE/TIME TBD)

Pianist Dan Weiser and mezzo-soprano Erma Mellinger warm up our February with German lieder, operatic arias, and songs from musical theater. *Admission \$20, FCC members \$10; more at www.classicopia.org.*

Trois Trios with UVMC Faculty—Sunday, March 4, at 3:00 pm

Pianist Victoria Nooe, cellist Benjamin Kulp, and our own in-house clarinetist Meghan Davis offer a concert showcasing the talented faculty next door at the Upper Valley Music Center.



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

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**Music
at the
Meetinghouse**

MID-WINTER CONCERTS

All in the Sanctuary, FCC

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Open Sing V: The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams—Sunday, January 28, 3:00 pm

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**FCC-Lebanon
Annual Meeting
2018**

Sunday, February 11, 11:15 am

Tools for Aging with Dignity

A Five-week Class on Tuesdays, 10:30-12:00

January 16 to February 13

Lebanon United Methodist Church

*Materials Fee: \$15. For questions, more details, and
registration, contact Barb Jones or Sharon Parker
(parker.nh@gmail.com/603-863-7348)*