



Grace Notes

The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

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The Pastoral Perspective

As I've gotten older and moved around, I've come to appreciate very old friends, people I know from my youth. One of them died a couple years ago, and Andy's passing was an unwelcome reminder of my own mortality. Another friend, Jay, is married with a daughter now in college. It's hard to realize that I was a camp counselor with both Andy and Jay. But I was. And I was a teenager at the time, then a college student, with the whole world ahead of me. Now, I'm 58 with a teenage son, who has the whole world ahead of him. The old truism applies: the more things change, the more they stay the same.

We see this in Scripture, too. One of the last verses of the letter to the Hebrews (13:8) tells us that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever." While we don't know who the epistle's author is—Paul has been eliminated due to significant stylistic differences, and others, ranging from Barnabas to Priscilla, have been suggested instead—that really does not matter. I think the question of authorship was best addressed by Origen of Alexandria, the church father whom the early historian Eusebius cites as writing, "Who it was that really wrote the Epistle, God only knows." So, the author remains unknown, but the confident assertion remains true: Jesus Christ stays the same.

In a world marked by change and uncertainty, this kind of assurance is welcome. Prices may rise, wars may rage, viruses may menace us, and all may seem hopeless. But nothing is ever without hope, because, as the unknown author of this letter told a faith community under real duress, Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and for eternity.

That may seem like a big claim, but knowing that God is always with us is a blessing. It is a gift. And it is something I can count on, no matter my age or life circumstances.

So, yes, there will be challenges, but God never promised to make those go away, did He? We will deal with serious illnesses, financial problems, and failures in our personal relationships, but we will never be alone, because Jesus Christ, the one who our faith tells us lived and died for us, is eternal.

Yours faithfully, *Steve*

SUNDAY SERVICE

All Are Welcome to Worship at FCC

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

For in-person worshippers, masks and vaccination are strongly encouraged but optional.

Coffee Hour Returning in February!

We'll resume this popular fellowship opportunity on two Sundays each month. **Stay tuned for more details and calls for volunteers.**

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.

WORSHIP IN THE PARISH HALL

Sundays, January 15 through March 26

Starting this month our worship services will move to "winter quarters" in the Parish Hall. The shift cuts our usage of heating oil during these coldest months, while also providing us an opportunity for a different perspective and format for worship. *You may still use either the front Sanctuary door or the ramp door to enter.*

Spend Some Time in the Corner!

The **Children's Community Corner**, that is! We'd like more adults in our congregation to engage with FCC's fantastic kids, whether on Sundays or some other time. **Our purpose for such interaction is mentorship and guidance, not just supervision.** Please think about offering your time—thanks!

If you're interested in connecting with our young people in this way, please contact Nan Parsons at nlp3721@yahoo.com or 603-863-8354.

THE SOUPER BOWL IS BACK!

With pro football's championship game happening in mid-February, we have plenty of time to support this year's SOUPER BOWL! We will again tackle local hunger with a collection of soup and other non-perishable items, to be split among our neighbors at HEADREST, the UPPER VALLEY HAVEN, and LISTEN COMMUNITY SERVICES.

**Last year's record of 500 cans is unbeatable...
OR IS IT???**

Donations will be collected in the boxes in the Parish Hall January 15 through February 12. You may also bring them directly to those three beneficiaries if you'd rather (but please let us know if you do). Thank you!

2023 ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, February 12, 11:15 am

(Following Worship, on Zoom)

The Annual Meeting of the First Congregational Church of Lebanon, NH, will be held online (in Zoom format) immediately after the worship service on Sunday, February 12, 2023, 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.

*Please note that content for the
2022 ANNUAL REPORT
must be submitted to the Church Administrator by
Friday, January 13, 2023*

This will ensure timely publication of the report prior to the Annual Meeting on February 12.

JANUARY 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25 <i>Christmas Day</i> 10a Worship/CCC (Communion)	26 (No Suzuki Program)	27 4:30p FCC Choir	28	29 7p NA Group	30	31
1 <i>New Year's Day</i> 10a Worship/CCC (Communion)	2 (No Suzuki Program)	3 4:30p FCC Choir 6p GB Tai Chi	4	5 7p NA Group	6 7:30p Anon Coffeehouse	7
8 10a Worship/CCC	9 4-8p UVMC Suzuki Program 7p Diaconate	10 4:30p FCC Choir 6p GB Tai Chi No Church Council (<i>moved to 1/24</i>)	11 8a-4p NH-WIC 6p Bel Canto Auditions	12 7p NA Group	13 6-9p Leb Rec Quilters Retreat	14 9a-5p Leb Rec Quilters Retreat
15 10a Worship/CCC	16 <i>MLK Jr. Day</i> (No Suzuki Program)	17 4:30p FCC Choir 6p GB Tai Chi 7p Cantabile Rehearsal	18 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers (<i>resumes weekly</i>)	19 7p NA Group	20 7:30p Anon Coffeehouse	21 7p The Becker Sisters: Northern Legend
22 10a Worship/CCC 3p Cantabile: All Shall Be Well	23 4-8p UVMC Suzuki Program	24 4:30p FCC Choir 6p GB Tai Chi 7p Church Council (<i>moved from 1/10</i>)	25 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	26 11a-6p NH-WIC 5p Upper Valley Baroque Talk w/ Concertmaster 7p NA Group	27 11a-6p UVB Rehearsal	28 11a-2p UVB Rehearsal 7p UV Baroque: Italian Concerto
29 10a Worship/CCC 3p UV Baroque: Italian Concerto	30 4-8p UVMC Suzuki Program	31 6p GB Tai Chi 4:30p FCC Choir	1 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	2 7p NA Group	3 7:30p Anon Coffeehouse	4

If you have questions or corrections regarding any event, please notify us at church@fccleb.org or 603-448-4281.

NEWS AND NOTES

CHURCH COUNCIL

In his December **pastor's report** to Council the Rev. Steve Silver noted preparations for a December 15 memorial service for Nan Parsons' husband Larry Kirkpatrick. Steve offered prayers for Nan and Kailyn, and for Linda Jacobs as she faces stent surgery. He also celebrated Valerie Nevel's trip to India for her daughter Tori's wedding, wishing the couple well and safe travels for all. He reported a lively, festive gathering at the Parsonage for caroling and potluck on December 11, attended by about 25 people.

In other reports, Treasurer Dawn Troutman has begun work with the Finance Committee on the **2023 budget**, which she plans to share with Council in January. Board of Governors chair Walter Scott has secured a quote for the **Parsonage insulation** project from Chey Insulation for far less than other quotes obtained prior to the pandemic. With a 50% deposit due now, it was suggested that this capital cost be split between this year's budget and next.

Linda Gerlach reported that the **Diaconate** agreed to recommend modifying our COVID protocols, pending a full Council discussion. The Deacons have also considered how to attract visitors and new members, a priority in the coming year. We are also in need of more Zoom greeters on Sundays, beyond the same small group of volunteers who thus far have done it.

Revisiting **year-end finances**, Dawn reported that expenses have risen as income has lagged, so we're not where

we had anticipated we would be. It's not a crisis, just not what we would prefer; we have been fortunate for several years, so it's important to keep this downturn in perspective. Trustee chair Valerie Nevel confirmed that she has already exceeded the total-return distributions budgeted for the year, and funding our 2023 budget will pose challenges, especially with staff salary increases. She suggested more targeted appeals for capital projects, mission funding, and other ministry areas. Walter Scott asked about initiating online giving, concerned that this limitation has hurt stewardship. Jon Scott clarified that we are still awaiting IRS certification of our non-profit status, which is necessary to receive online donations. Jon then added that the **Personnel Committee** is discussing updates for 2023 compensation and considering how best to set staff goals, conduct reviews, and update job descriptions.

For **Mission and Social Action**, Valerie Nevel pointed out the rise in spending on the Open Door Ministry in 2022. While all clearly agree on a commitment to funding this vital ministry, we have to plan how this can be sustainably done in the future. On a related topic, Rev. Silver will again speak at the annual homeless memorial vigil in Colburn Park on December 21.

Jon noted that the **Pastor-Parish Relations Committee** hopes to meet in January, ideally with guidance from the NH Conference on the group's purpose and how it should function. Current members of the PPRC are Barb Jones (Moderator/Chair), Linda Gerlach (Diaconate

Chair), Sue Pratt (Deacon), Walter Scott (Board of Goves), and Jon Scott (At-Large). More broadly, Jon restated the need to seriously overhaul our **Bylaws**—more than minor revisions around the margins—in order to serve our current congregation effectively. The NH Conference can offer help and comparable models to follow.

Some of the Conference's guidance on bylaws appears in the **report from Revs. Gordon Rankin and Campbell Lovett** following this year's listening session process. Recalling that members of Council expressed disappointment in the process, Jon invited Council to discuss the report, both among ourselves and with Revs. Rankin and Lovett. Although Jon circulated the report in November, some Council members had not yet reviewed it. Jon offered to redistribute it, with the intention of collecting more specific feedback in January.

Jon then introduced a discussion of **possible modification of our COVID protocols**, referring to ideas that Rev. Silver had included in his pastor's report on the basis of discussion in the Diaconate. Regarding **service of communion**, Steve and the Deacons recommended that we return to our familiar process of intinction, while still offering a prepackaged option for anyone who prefers that.

Committee Meetings

The following regular meetings will happen remotely via Zoom:

Diaconate	1/9 and TBD, 7:00
Council	1/24 and TBD, 7:00
MSA	1/23, 7:00

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

Discussion of a **mask requirement**—and its application in a variety of contexts like worship, coffee hour, and public concerts—posed more complexity. Steve initially suggested inviting anyone uncomfortable with wearing a mask to remove it, making clear that it is still acceptable for anyone else to wear a mask. Several responded that it would be difficult to monitor such an approach, and some worried that it would unfairly single out individuals on either side of the choice. Many felt it would be easiest and most inclusive simply to make masks optional for everyone, accommodating all choices. Jon was concerned that some mask-wearers might feel undue social pressure or judgment, though responses assured him that such pressures would be much less likely in worship at FCC (if it happens at all) than in society at large. After further debate of these dynamics, considering a number of scenarios both within and beyond our congregation, a consensus arose to make masking optional.

Considering the **resumption of coffee hour**, it was recognized that this is itself an optional activity (as distinct from worship), in which mask-wearing poses practical issues as well. And all agree on the benefit of reviving social interaction and fellowship outside of worship. There was, however, general support for delaying a full resumption of coffee hour until after the holiday season, for both COVID safety and the uncertainty of who would be responsible for providing refreshments. Council voted for coffee hour on two Sundays each month, starting in February.

Prepared to Serve

Saturday, February 25
8:00 am–3:30 pm

Pembroke Academy
Pembroke, NH



Connecting & Reconnecting

I want to see you and share with you the same blessings that God's Spirit has given me. Then you will grow stronger in your faith. What I am saying is that we can encourage each other by the faith that is ours. Romans 1:11-12 (CEV)

Prepared to Serve is an annual training event for members of the NH Conference (UCC), offering workshops on topics ranging from stewardship, lay leadership, and church finances to service, mission, and Christian education. All are invited to participate in an enriching day of classes, exhibits, and worship with our conference friends.

FCC will pay for any interested congregation members to attend!
Registration deadline is February 15. (Includes resources and meals.)

More information and details at www.nhcucc.org.

Stewardship 2023: Dream Big

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. —Isaiah 65:17

The prophet Isaiah offered these words at a time when the exiles of Judah were wondering about their future. Having seen promises go unfulfilled in the past, they despaired. They hoped to restore their imagined glory, and they wondered just what God had planned for them. Isaiah told them that God sought a break with the past, a fresh start for his people, grounded in possibility. Following the disruptions of COVID, we may now ask, “Who do we want to be? Where is God calling us to go?” We may disagree on the answers, but we can agree on the destination: **a sustainable, healthy future for our community.**

We're so grateful to have received 27 pledges so far for 2023. No matter the size of your pledge, faithful stewardship is vital to our mission and ministry. Thank you for prayerfully and honestly considering your commitment to FCC this year!

Offering envelopes for 2023 are available in the Parish Hall. Please take whichever box you wish and record it on the list.

OUR WIDER COMMUNITY AND MISSION

December 14, 2021

Dear Brian and Steve,

We just finished creating our 2022 Year in Review video, and I wanted to share it and say thanks so much for all you have done to make our programs possible this year! **It's impossible to imagine how we would have done any of this without such amazing neighbors.**

Looking forward to much more music in the year to come,

Erin Smith
Assistant Director



Click [HERE](#) or visit uvmusic.org to view the 2022 Year in Review video, which features a number of events at FCC. And thanks to our neighbors for being just as “amazing”!

Looking for a New Year's resolution that could make a lasting impact?

Become a CASA
volunteer advocate for children!

Apply now for our January
or March training

Learn more at www.casanh.org



Volunteer in 2023 for CASA-NH
Virtual Trainings Begin January 18 and March 6

CASA (Court-Appointed Special Advocates) of NH trains and supervises compassionate and concerned citizens to advocate for abused and neglected children in our court system. Offering their common sense, experience, commitment, and skills for 10-15 hours a month, volunteer advocates help ensure a brighter future for children in safe, stable homes.

The past year has brought an unprecedented rise in abuse and neglect cases in NH, making the need for advocates more urgent than ever—CASA is able to meet less than 60% of current demand.

For more, contact Katie Pelczar (603-528-8006 x6 or kpelczar@casanh.org) or visit www.casanh.org.

To accommodate schedule conflicts and maximize participation, the **next meeting of Council** was moved to January 24. Despite being later in the month, that date still allows for decisions to be incorporated in the annual report and processed before Annual Meeting on February 12.

DIACONATE

At their meeting in December, the Deacons planned for the reception after Larry Kirkpatrick's memorial service, to be coordinated by Dawn Troutman. Other concerns included the recoveries of Chris Chase and

Deb Scott, and Linda Jacobs' stent surgery prior to Christmas. Stacey Steele celebrated that she has just landed a new job; she added that a recent visitor had complimented our congregation's attention to the role of Deacon.

In his pastor's report, the Rev. Steve Silver outlined our two Christmas Eve services, followed by a Sunday communion service on Christmas morning. Steve will make an appeal from the pulpit for volunteer ushers and Zoom greeters. The Deacons also discussed a return to traditional service of communion elements,

retaining a prepackaged option for those who'd like that. The group further recommended resuming coffee hour for anyone looking to stay after worship and socialize.

Dawn Troutman confirmed the creation of a budget line item for modest Diaconate expenses, such as shawl materials, cards, and other congregational care items.

The Deacons also considered some continuation of a reading group, perhaps involving Bible study or the topic of civility in disagreement. It was agreed that any group should adopt ground rules for discussion.

THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION



Thank You for the
 gifts I cant
 wait to open them
 from caris and
 caris
 ELI
 Thank you
 for the gifts.

Thank you, Santa C!
 'Tis the season for smiles –
 and for wishing you everything
 that's happy, merry, and bright!

BASKETS OF THANKS. For two weeks in December, FCC served as the sorting and distribution hub for LISTEN's Holiday Baskets program. A delightful thank-you card from one of FCC's recipient families suggests the program's grateful community of beneficiaries.



GOOD CHEER AT KIMBALL AND ELM. Our first Parsonage Christmas party since 2019—on a perfectly snowy December afternoon—gathered friends old and new for enthusiastic caroling, delicious food, joyous laughter, and seasonal spirit.

THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS AT FCC



MUSIC AT THE MEETINGHOUSE



Music at the Meetinghouse

A New Year of Concerts!

All in the Sanctuary. Masks and vaccination recommended.

The Anonymous Coffeehouse—Fridays, January 6 and 20, February 3 and 17, all at 7:30 pm

Come enjoy our popular community venue for live local music! Conceived as an informal “listening room” for emerging musicians, each show features several acoustic acts. Patrons come and go as they please; baked goods and non-alcoholic drinks available. *Free admission. For performers and more, visit anoncoffee.org/.*

The Becker Sisters: Northern Legend—Saturday, January 21, at 7:00 pm

An immensely talented duo, Kirsten and Alyssa Becker move audiences with their artistry in voice, piano, and classical guitar. Ranging from opera to jazz, Broadway to original compositions, this intimate, warm concert is perfect for the dark nights of winter. *Adults \$10, under 12 free; more at www.kirstenbeckermusic.com.*

Cantabile Women’s Chorus: All Shall Be Well—Sunday, January 22, at 3:00 pm

Kathy Sherlock-Green directs this wonderful women’s chorus in a warm, comforting program of Claude Debussy, Gabriel Fauré, Benjamin Britten, Felix Mendelssohn, Philip Silvey, and more. *Adults \$15, seniors \$10, students (13+) \$5, under 13 free. Advance ticket purchase preferred; more at www.cantabilewomen.org.*

Upper Valley Baroque: The Italian Concerto—Saturday, Jan. 28, 7:00 / Sunday, Jan. 29, 3:00

Led by the incomparably energetic Filippo Ciabatti, this acclaimed professional ensemble continues its second season with intimate, elegant, and lively concerti by six different Italian Baroque composers. *Admission starts at \$25; advance online purchase only. Pre-concert “Talk with the Concertmaster” at FCC on Thursday, Jan. 26, at 5:00 pm. Tickets and more information at www.uppervalleybaroque.org.*

Benjamin Kulp, Cello—Sunday, February 12, at 3:00 pm

The Upper Valley Music Center presents this recital by superb cellist and faculty member Ben Kulp. *Program TBD, freewill donation. More details at uvmusic.org/event/ben-kulp-solo-cello-recital.*

Classicopia: Trios by African-American Composers—Sunday, February 26, at 2:00 pm

Pianist Daniel Weiser and siblings Emmanuel (violin) and Frances Borowsky (cello) offer this program to celebrate Black History Month. *Adults \$20, FCC members \$15, children free; for more, visit classicopia.org.*



A MUSICAL ADVENT. We celebrated the season with a full concert calendar, including Bel Canto’s Winter Dreams and Classicopia’s fabulous Four-Hand Holiday on piano.

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 • Music: music@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



Music
at the
Meetinghouse

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(Following Worship on Zoom)

THE SOUPER BOWL IS BACK!

*Donations gratefully accepted at the church from
January 15 to February 12. Thank you!*

First Congregational Church of Lebanon

The Rev. Stephen R. Silver, Pastor

Ernie Drown, Organist and Choir Director • Nancy Parsons, Children’s Community Corner

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

Brian Clancy, Church Administrator

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