



Grace Notes

The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

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The Pastoral Perspective

“Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet” is a phrase with which you might be familiar, especially if you’ve done any editing or publishing work. (You may learn more [HERE](#) in a summary from Microsoft Word’s help pages.) The phrase is Latin, purportedly drawn from the ancient statesman Cicero, and loosely translates to “the pain of an average man.”

“So what?” you might wonder. That would not be an unreasonable thought, but frankly, right now, I have nothing to say.

Okay, I have nothing *truly memorable* to say. And if I’m going to share gibberish with you, why not do so in Latin? Things always sound better, more learned in Latin. This is supposedly a dead language, yet it is still taught in some schools and has yet to release its grip on the Roman Catholic Church, a global institution with universalist pretensions. I can think of few things that would have pleased the Romans of the ancient world more than the idea of a Korean cardinal speaking the language of classical Rome. (Well, they might have been even happier with the idea of the Roman Empire stretching all the way across Asia to the Pacific, but the East was a strange and mysterious place, and we’ll set that particular rumination aside.)

What I can say is that this bit of rambling is from the works of Cicero, a great Roman orator and noted legal mind, a man of influence and position who came to a sad end after choosing the losing side in the fallout from Caesar’s play for power. Still, what Cicero achieved has spawned three terrific books by the British author Robert Harris.

Another ancient who ran afoul of the authorities and paid with his life was none other than Jesus. We’ve just celebrated Jesus’ birthday, and we’ll now recount his life and ministry in the weeks leading up to Lent and Easter—events of long ago that still shape our world.

The stories of both Cicero and Jesus are of anything but average men. But the pain they each suffered was something that all men and women can relate to. Times may be tough, circumstances difficult for some of us. But we have the knowledge, experience, and prayers of the past to lift us in the present.

Continued on Page 5

SUNDAY SERVICE

All Are Welcome to Worship at FCC *Sundays at 10:00 AM (In-Person/Zoom)*

Coffee Hour Served!

We're happy to share this fellowship opportunity as often as we can. **New volunteers always welcome—please sign up on the list in the kitchen.**

Zoom 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.

STEWARDSHIP 2024

Don't Bury Your Treasure

For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance. —Matt 25:29

The **parable of the talents** tells of three workers entrusted with their employer's vast wealth in his absence. Two of them invest their shares, earning a high return. The third, worried that his boss will punish him should he incur a loss, buries his money instead. The boss scolds and punishes him anyway.

We've been given much by God, and we should use it wisely, to advance the Kingdom of God. So, don't bury that treasure—use it for God!

We're grateful to have received 26 pledges so far!

No matter how much you pledge, faithful stewardship is vital to FCC's mission and ministry in 2024. Thanks for your support.

Offering envelopes for 2024 are available in the Parish Hall. Please take whichever unassigned box you wish and record it on the list.

THE SOUPER BOWL IS BACK!

With pro football's championship game coming up in mid-February, it's time once again to support the **SOUPER BOWL!** We will tackle local hunger with a collection of soup and other non-perishable items, to be split among our neighbors at **HEADREST**, the **UV HAVEN**, and **LISTEN COMMUNITY SERVICES**.

**Last year's record of 556 cans is unbeatable...
OR IS IT???**

Donations will be collected in the boxes in the Parish Hall January 14 through February 11. You may also bring them directly to the three beneficiaries if you'd rather (but please let us know, so we can count it). Thank you!

2024 ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, February 11, 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 11, 2024, 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
2023 ANNUAL REPORT*

must be submitted to the Church Administrator by

Friday, January 12, 2024

*This will ensure timely publication of the report
prior to the Annual Meeting on February 11.*

JANUARY 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31 10a Worship/CCC	1 <i>New Year's Day</i> No UVMC	2 1p Cameo Baroque 4:30p FCC Choir	3 3-6:30p UVMC	4 11a B. Sargent Memorial 3-6:30p UVMC/Children's Choir 7p NA Group	5 5-6p UVMC Suzuki Program	6 EPIPHANY
7 10a Worship/CCC (Communion)	8 4-9p UVMC Suzuki Program 7p Diaconate	9 1p Cameo Baroque 4:30p FCC Choir 7p Council	10 8a-3:30p WIC 3-6:30p UVMC	11 3-6:30p UVMC/Children's Choir 7p NA Group	12 5-6p UVMC Suzuki Program 6-8p Anon Coffee Volunteer Dinner	13 9a-12p UVMC Comm Chorus Rehearsal
14 10a Worship/CCC	15 4-9p UVMC Suzuki Program	16 1p Cameo Baroque 4:30p FCC Choir	17 3-6:30p UVMC 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	18 3-6:30p UVMC/Children's Choir 7p NA Group	19 5-6p UVMC Suzuki Program 7p UVMC Comm Chorus Concert	20
21 10a Worship/CCC	22 4-9p UVMC Suzuki Program	23 1p Cameo Baroque 4:30p FCC Choir 7p Cantabile Rehearsal	24 3-6:30p UVMC 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	25 11a-6p WIC 3-6:30p UVMC/Children's Choir 7p NA Group	26 5-6p UVMC Suzuki Program 7:30p Anon Coffeehouse	27
28 10a Worship/CCC 3p Cantabile: Northern Exposure	29 4-9p UVMC Suzuki Program	30 1p Cameo Baroque 4:30p FCC Choir	31 3-6:30p UVMC 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	1 3-6:30p UVMC/Children's Choir 7p NA Group	2 5-6p UVMC Suzuki Program 6:30p Leb Rec Quilters Retreat	3 9a-5p Leb Rec Quilters Retreat
4 10a Worship/CCC (Communion)	5 4-9p UVMC Suzuki Program	6 1p Cameo Baroque 4:30p FCC Choir	7 3-6:30p UVMC 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	8 3-6:30p UVMC/Children's Choir 7p NA Group	9 5-6p UVMC Suzuki Program 7:30p Anon Coffeehouse	10 10a-2p UVMC Recitals

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

Jon Scott opened December's Council meeting with a reflection on his pronoun preferences. He recognized that while identifying those may not seem necessary to Council members, it's important in some contexts to make others feel included and respected.

Rev. Steve Silver had little to add to his **pastor's report**. He'll officiate the ordination service for Daniel Adam at West Leb Congregational Church on December 31, which all are welcome to attend. On behalf of Children's Community Corner, he encouraged adults to participate in this year's Christmas Eve pageant, as some families will be away.

Remarking on a rise in worship attendance in recent weeks, Steve reported that a simple **welcome brochure** would be available in the pews on December 17. Brian Clancy will produce the brochure, which he explained would offer only basic information on worship times, the Christmas Eve schedule, and the congregational welcome statement that appears weekly on our bulletin. While temporary, the brochure may well attract interested visitors from concert audiences.

Linda Gerlach reported that the **Diaconate** had discussed the brochure, as well as the use of the Deacons' box in the narthex and the possibility of initiating a prayer chain in January. The group also agreed to have two Deacons assist the pastor during communion, one standing on each side with a cup for intinction, in order to make the process smoother.

Walter Scott has supplied 2024 budget requests to Treasurer Dawn Troutman on behalf of the **Board of Governors**. He had nothing further to report.

Brian Clancy noted a full schedule for **Music at the Meetinghouse** in December. Asked about Lebanon Opera House's potential use of FCC as an alternate venue during its renovation, Brian reported that he was in touch with Joe Clifford at LOH but had not recently received any inquiries.

Valerie Nevel reported that **Mission and Social Action** had reviewed its activity for the year, including visits to worship by several local service organizations. Looking forward to 2024, the committee hopes to organize a post-worship discussion forum on the affordable housing crisis. Jon Scott asked whether there was sufficient funding through the end of the year for the Open Door Ministry, and Brian confirmed that there was.

Valerie also reported on the **Trustees'** recent meeting with representatives of United Church Funds, which manages some of our investments. Discussion points included the criteria by which UCF screens its investments, details of the Beyond Fossil Fuels Fund, and marketing aspects of so-called ESG (environmental/social/governance) investing. Valerie believes that UCF is a solid organization, and we can trust their investment screening despite their need to improve administrative operations. Jon would like to invite new volunteers to get involved with Trustee matters and to improve

Committee Meetings

The following regular meetings will happen remotely via Zoom:

Diaconate	1/8 and 2/8, 7:00
Council	1/9 and 2/9, 7:00
MSA	1/22, 7:00

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

congregational awareness of our investments. Valerie emphasized that all congregants are welcome to attend meetings.

Treasurer Dawn Troutman gave updated income and expense figures, noting that a substantial stock gift was in process. She reviewed some projections for the **2024 budget**, which shows an income goal of about \$250,000. Valerie cautioned that in 2023, investments provided unprecedented income of \$60,000 in total return distributions, in addition to \$15,000 transferred from our escrow account, an approach that she feels is unsustainable. Such increased withdrawals will ultimately mean drawing from endowment principal, not just income, and the highest priority now should be to increase stewardship.

On the expense side of the 2024 budget, the largest chunk is for personnel, including a new salary of as much as \$15,000 for a Christian Education coordinator. In the hope that staff compensation figures can be settled in January, Jon advised that the Finance Committee meet first with the pastor, then with other staff, possibly assisted by an HR

NEWS AND NOTES

consultant. Valerie noted progress in the Personnel Committee's move to specify staff holidays and vacation benefits. Other expense priorities include the repair and improvement of the church's front steps and a significant upgrade of the Sanctuary sound system. For the latter purpose, we've already received some funding but hope to raise more from the congregation.

While there was some consensus on a preliminary approval of the proposed budget, the net deficit

does raise concern. Valerie reiterated her misgivings about our present endowment approach; what seems to be an unusual year may actually indicate a longer-term trend, since the conditions driving our current deficit will likely persist in coming years. Brian Clancy further pointed out that we don't typically receive such large stock gifts as the one now in process, and if we face a similar deficit challenge in the future, there seems no guarantee that this kind of unexpected windfall will happen

again. The Finance Committee and Trustees continue to seek solutions. Lastly, Rev. Silver offered an update on the new **Christian Education position**, for which our financial constraints may prevent an optimal salary offer. Steve is committed to doing the best we can within these constraints, however. Our younger children are growing into teenagers, and so we need someone who can adapt to working with them. Jon noted that we'd like to post the job in January and hire in February.

Spend Time in the Corner!

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

Interested? Please contact the church office or the Rev. Steve Silver at revsrs@live.com.

PREPARED TO SERVE

Saturday, February 24, 8:00 am–4:00 pm
Pembroke Academy, Pembroke, NH

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

FCC will pay for any interested congregation members to attend! Registration deadline is February 14. (Includes resources and meals.)

More details at nhcucc.regfox.com/prepared-to-serve-2024.

Creating New Tables

Matthew 21:12-16



The Pastoral Perspective, *continued from Page 1*

So, I will close with a bit more Latin, the Vulgate version of the Song of Simeon in the Gospel of Luke: "Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, secundum verbum tuum." In the more prosaic but understandable English translation of the Compline, or evening service, the phrase reads, "Lord, now may your servant go in peace, just as you promised."

These words are said at night, when we have finished our day's work and offer final prayers to God. It is a prayer of hope and confidence, affirming a conviction of God's companionship in Jesus and through the Spirit, trusting in His steadfast presence with us always.

Yours faithfully,

Steve

THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS AT FCC. From the Parsonage hearth to weekly candle-lighting, our congregation once again tended the flames of the Christmas spirit. Erin Smith led children singing “Go Tell It on the Mountain,” a series of families joined in the Advent liturgy, and a star-studded cast told the Nativity tale (next page) in a delightful pageant.

THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION



OUR LOCAL MISSION



ANGEL FOR A GOOD CAUSE. In conjunction with the Christmas Concert Spectacular (see next page), sculptor Tony Perham transformed a cold block of ice into a warm angel playing harp. Tony gratefully accepted donations all afternoon, and the concert itself brought in even more—totaling over \$2000, which was matched by the Byrne Foundation, all to benefit the Upper Valley Haven.

Make 2024 the Year You Advocate for a Child

Children who experienced abuse or neglect are waiting for someone to advocate for their best interests. Become a CASA.

Visit casanh.org/infosessions



Volunteer in 2024 for CASA-NH

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.

Amid a rise in abuse and neglect cases in NH, the need for court advocates is increasingly urgent—CASA is able to meet less than 60% of demand.

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



December 28, 2023

Dear Brian and Steve,

Thank you so much for all that you and the church have done in the past year with UVMC! We just finished our 2023 Year in Review video, with music from our new harp teacher and lots of great photos and quotes from our participants.

Happy Holidays!

Erin Smith
Assistant Director

Click [HERE](#) or visit uvmusic.org to view the 2023 Year in Review, which features several events at FCC. And thanks to our neighbors at UVMC!

MUSIC AT THE MEETINGHOUSE



Music
at the
Meetinghouse

Winter Concerts

All in the Sanctuary. Masks welcome but optional.

Upper Valley Music Center Community Chorus—Friday, January 19, at 7:00 pm

Directed by Annie Arrington and accompanied by Will Ögmundson, UVMC's Community Chorus is pleased to offer its debut concert! The program includes a variety of musical styles and genres, in the spirit of the group's motto—"Just Sing!" *More at uvmusic.org/event/community-chorus-uvmc-concert.*

The Anonymous Coffeehouse—Fridays, Jan. 26, Feb. 9 and 23, Mar. 8 and 22, all 7:30 pm

Our comfy community venue for live folk music is thriving in its fourth season! An informal "listening room" for emerging musicians, each show features several acoustic acts. Come and go as you please; baked goods and hot drinks available. *Free admission, donations welcome. For performers and more, visit anoncoffee.org/.*

Cantabile Women's Voices: Northern Exposure—Sunday, January 28, at 3:00 pm

Kathy Sherlock-Green brings back this outstanding choral ensemble with an exploration of music from across northern Europe and Canada. The program includes Eriks Esenvalds, Jean Sibelius, Kim André Arnesen, Canadians Eleanor Daley and Donald Patriquin, and an original piece by Kim Baryluk based on Native Canadian Mi'kmaq chant. *Adults \$15, seniors \$10, students (13+) \$5, under 13 free. Advance ticket purchase preferred; more details at cantabilewomen.org/january-2024-concert.*

UVMC Presents Ben Kulp, Cello, and Chenyu Wang, Piano—Sunday, February 11, at 3:00 pm

Upper Valley Music Center's longtime cellist Ben Kulp joins new faculty member Chenyu Wang for a concert of short works for cello and piano. *More details at uvmusic.org/event/ben-kulp-cello-and-chenyu-wang-piano.*



MUSICAL MERRIMENT. Despite losing several singers to illness, Bel Canto brightened Advent with **Wintertide**; the Borowsky family's **Christmas Spectacular** gifted an array of seasonal music by numerous performers to an enthusiastic, over-full audience.

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

2024 ANNUAL MEETING

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(Following Worship on Zoom)

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January 14 to February 11. Thank you!*

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First Congregational Church of Lebanon

The Rev. Stephen R. Silver, Pastor

Ernie Drown, Organist and Choir Director • Brian Clancy, Church Administrator

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

603-448-4281 • church@fccleb.org • prayer@fccleb.org • music@fccleb.org • www.fccleb.org