

Grace Notes

The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

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The Pastoral Perspective

While I was off in July, I had the opportunity to reflect on going to church, on the presence of things and people I can count on, and, yes, to begin thinking about the fall and year to come. Ultimately, all three of these things were related.

Over these past weeks, I had the chance to attend a worship service in Maine over the Fourth of July weekend, at a chapel where I've worshiped in the past. The other weeks, I attended different churches online. Each service was good, and watching worship online, I once again felt immense gratitude to all who have borne with us during the pandemic and done church virtually. While livestreamed worship is exceedingly convenient, it's not the same as being in church, in person. Personally, I like seeing people, hearing their voices, immersing myself in the sights and sounds of a full sanctuary. And so, I extend my thanks to each of you. Thank you for coming to church, whether in-person or virtually.

I could hear the pealing of our church bell before Sunday worship. That sound not only calls us to worship in the present but also connects us to the past and, yes, hopefully leads us into the future.

I cannot say what the future holds, what issues will command our attention, which crises might disrupt our lives. Of course, that does not mean I will submit to a resignation to whatever befalls us. We will still make plans, dream dreams, and think about how we might use the time that is allotted to us.

This coming fall, I'll be spending a bit of time looking at issues of racial justice, specifically our relationship with what is known as the Black church. This is something I started doing in earnest in the spring, and I will focus more on the topic during my study leave in August, as I finish the book *Reading While Black* by Esau McCaulley. I'll take a deep dive into an online course taught by Prof. McCaulley and N. T. Wright on "Ethnicity, Justice, and the People of God." McCaulley is Black, Wright is White, and their explorations of Scripture and the faith in this context will be fascinating and illuminating. McCaulley is American, Wright is English. Yet rather than focus on what differentiates them, I will note that both are priests in the Anglican tradition, both are articulate and engaging teachers, and

Continued on Page 4

SUNDAY SERVICE

STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH *Special UCC Offering*



Contributions Welcome Until Labor Day

Strengthen the Church supports the growth of ministry and local congregations across the country. This year's theme—"All Together"—invokes the communal spirit of Pentecost. By renewing older faith communities, building new ones, and funding fellowships for young, emerging church leaders, this program is vital to the health of our denomination.

Please contribute as you are able. Thanks!

We will gratefully accept contributions (payable to FCC, memo "Strengthen the Church") through Labor Day.

Do Your Part to Fill the Cart!

Greater Lebanon continues to struggle with poverty and food insecurity, exacerbated by the persistent economic challenges from the pandemic. We have resumed collections in our shopping cart in the Parish Hall, in support of a variety of beneficiaries.

JULY AND AUGUST—non-perishable food and personal-care items for UPPER VALLEY HAVEN
(specific needs include canned beans, tuna, shelf-stable milk, instant oatmeal, pasta sauce)

Direct financial contributions to any Upper Valley service organization are always welcome. Thanks for fighting local poverty and hunger!

All Are Welcome to Worship at FCC Sundays at 10:00 am (Sanctuary/Zoom)

In-person worshipers are required to wear masks and observe distancing in the pews; we have not yet resumed coffee hour. Please contact the church office with questions, or to receive the Zoom link.

Greeters and Liturgists Needed!

Members of our congregation sing in the choir, serve as greeters and ushers, and read as liturgists. Additional roles include reading prayers, sharing stewardship messages, or even leading children's moments. All are invited to serve in these ways.

As we continue to offer services online, we also need a volunteer "ZOOM GREETER" each week.

No experience is required for these important roles! If you're interested in this opportunity to serve, please contact the church office.

Outdoor Service on FCC Lawn Sunday, August 21, 10:00 (Rain Date 8/28)

All are welcome to another of our open worship services in the fresh air on the church's front lawn. Masks will be optional for this outdoor service; no RSVP is necessary. Folding chairs will be available, but bring your own comfy lawn chair if you prefer!



Many thanks to the Rev. Gail Dimick, who led worship and preached for four Sundays in July while Steve Silver enjoyed vacation.

SAVE THE DATE! KICK-OFF SUNDAY is SEPTEMBER 11

CHURCH COUNCIL

Jon Scott opened Council in June by asking each member to reflect on what currently brings us joy, hope, and gratitude. People mentioned relationships with family and friends, spring weather and gardens (at FCC and elsewhere), and cautious hope on political issues. Several recognized the joy of Children's Sunday, with festive attendance, leadership and service by the kids, outdoor fellowship, and the baptism of Mac and Jack Callahan at Storrs Hill.

The **NH Conference's consultants**, Revs. Gordon Rankin and Campbell Lovett, had circulated a revised proposal and recommendations regarding next steps. Appreciating their observations, Jon emphasized that changing dynamics over many years, both inside and outside FCC's congregation, should be recognized with more intentionality. Valerie Nevel stressed the need to preserve institutional memory in some way, as some practices or agreements aren't explicitly recorded in our bylaws. Barb Jones expressed her concern about our ability to find time for further discussions, given how we already feel overtaxed as a congregation. Jon urged us to put in the necessary work if possible.

There was general support for a **second listening session** to include more voices, particularly from the Diaconate; ultimately, all agreed that the session should be open to the congregation. Jon explained that it would be open-ended, rather than framed with a particular topic or agenda. The NHC team offers a neutral forum for a wide-ranging

discussion among our congregation. Jon, Barb, and Rev. Steve Silver will be present, but the priority is to hear new voices and thoughts. Valerie cautioned that raising new issues which we can't solve or act on could perhaps be worse than not hearing the issues at all. John Gilliatt added that Council needs to be responsible for providing feedback, at least so that people know they've been heard. Initially set for June 23, the session has been rescheduled to **Monday, August 15, at 6:00 pm.**

In his **pastor's report**, Rev. Silver expressed appreciation for the June event for Ukraine at the La Salette shrine in Enfield. The service drew an impressive group of speakers, such as an inspiring representative from Samaritan's Purse who has worked with refugees throughout eastern Europe. Steve also credited Dominic Watson with the impetus for the Children's Community Corner's Upstanders for Ukraine fundraiser. As he concludes service as treasurer for the Congregational Library, Steve also affirmed the work that Valerie Nevel and Dawn Troutman do to manage FCC's finances.

Barb Jones reported that Sue Pratt would serve as the at-large member of **Pastor-Parish Relations**. Barb also lifted up the news that Stacey Steele had officially become a US citizen on June 9.

Responding to a discussion in the Diaconate, Council considered ventilation in the downstairs space, a concern as we consider returning to **in-person children's programs** in the fall. The group feels we should invest in that space to ensure that

recent momentum (as evidenced on Children's Sunday) would continue. Nan Parsons clarified, however, that the program's traditional emphasis on in-person gatherings may have shifted toward a hybrid model. Zoom is hardly ideal on its own, but it has surely made it easier for many kids and families to participate, including some who never have before.

Dawn Troutman offered an idea about **engaging the community more directly at non-FCC events**. In addition to flyers and testimonials from current members about why they are a part of our congregation, all agreed that it would be ideal to extend some in-person invitation at concerts and other events to explore FCC's worship life.

Council continues to check in regarding the status of our **COVID protocols**, especially as young kids are now eligible for vaccination. Without formally voting, the group generally agreed to maintain current practices through the summer. In a subsequent email discussion in July, Council and the Diaconate considered the news that a person who attended worship on July 17 tested positive for COVID within 12 hours. (Following all recommendations for

Upcoming Meetings

The following regular meetings will happen remotely via Zoom:

Diaconate	9/12, 7:00
Council	9/13, 7:00

Neither the Deacons nor Council will meet in August. For information about other groups' plans to meet in person or online, contact the church office.

isolating and notifying close contacts, the person soon recovered.) The email discussion considered whether to suspend in-person worship for some period of time, but ultimately all agreed that was unnecessary as long as the remote option remains available to anyone at any time.

DIACONATE

The Deacons continue to follow up on **congregational-care needs**, such as Ernie Drown's recovery from hand surgery and Dawn Troutman's progress recovering from a broken ankle. Numerous prayer shawls have been presented over the years, and the group discussed the need for more volunteer knitters, with Sue Pratt offering to train them.

The Rev. Steve Silver was pleased with the energy of the **Children's Sunday** worship service, led by the kids in various ways. He also affirmed the Callahan baptism by the creek at Storrs Hill, which sets a precedent

for an outdoor rite if desirable again. The Deacons observed that our current cluster of kids around age 10 should have some ongoing attention as a group, perhaps in the form of Deacon or confirmation mentors. The group also discussed the need to improve ventilation downstairs in order to resume activities there. Steve will speak with both Council and Nan Parsons regarding summer and fall plans, including the option of hybrid programming this fall.

The Deacons expressed interest in holding **outdoor worship** services in August or September. They also have supported the resumption of post-worship coffee hour while the weather still permits that to happen outside. In our reduced communion format during the pandemic, Steve has tended to manage setting up the elements himself, although the Deacons' continued assistance with this responsibility is appreciated.

For Eliot Fay's ordination service on June 26, the Deacons planned a

reception to celebrate this important milestone, as FCC has helped Eliot throughout this process. The Scott family will hold a family baptism in Plainfield for Walter and Deserai's children in September. Carolin Bassett's memorial service will take place on Saturday, September 24, close to her and Bob's wedding anniversary. We will also hold a memorial for Larry Doyle this fall in conjunction with an opportunity for congregational hospitality, with which many associate him.

Rev. Silver took vacation in July, with the Rev. Gail Dimick leading worship in his absence; he will also take a week of study leave in mid-August, so Chris Chase will preach on August 14. This fall Steve plans to lead a Wednesday-evening book group, discussing Esau McCaulley's *Reading While Black*. The author and his book will be included in an N. T. Wright online course on race and Christianity, which Steve will take during his study leave.

The Pastoral Perspective, *continued from Page 1*

both are called to share the Word of God in the pulpit, in the classroom, and through the media. These two men get that an essential part of being a Christian is being in community.

Of course, we know this. We look at the Trinity, the three persons of God, who are one. We look at the pattern of Jesus' life, lived in community with the disciples. We think of the Holy Spirit, in each of us and extant throughout the world, binding together different people and faraway places.

So, think about what the future holds, and what you hope to see happen. Think about not just what you want, but what you can do for others. I ask this knowing that you, the people of FCC Lebanon, are a generous, giving group, one I can count on to do the right thing, to gather in the presence of God, to be his people, gathered in faith and hope and love.

Yours faithfully,

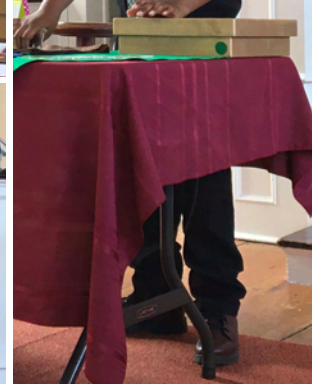
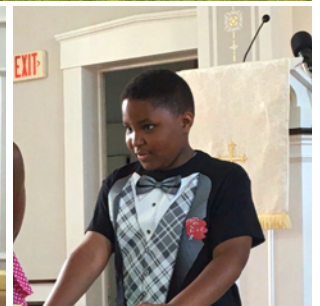
Steve

THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION



**Children's
Sunday**

June 12
2022



THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION



THANK YOU!

This year's SHELTER SUNDAY collection raised \$850, and we're so grateful to have celebrated fathers once again with a generous donation to Upper Valley Habitat for Humanity.

Brian, thank you so much for hosting our board retreat and for all FCC's support. It feels really wonderful to be more plugged into your church and the hub of activity it's felt like. And it was super fun partnering with you and COVER in this Bike & Build adventure! Thank you for being a central spoke in all of this (lame pun intended!).

And thank you, FCC congregation, for your generous and ongoing support! We are so blessed to be included in your Shelter Sunday celebration and honored to be the recipient of your kindness, generosity, and compassion.

Thank you,
Eva Loomis
Executive Director



Bike & Build
Pedaling for Affordable Housing

BIKE & BUILD RETURNS! An energetic group of biker-builders stayed at FCC for the first time in three years, working with COVER Home Repair and at a Habitat for Humanity site in Lebanon. After a June 15 barbecue with COVER director Helen Hong and several of her volunteers, the group rolled out early the next day for Rochester, VT, and points west (in central Montana as of early August).



THANK YOU FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH for opening your beautiful church doors to us for two nights. We deeply appreciate your generosity and welcoming community as we bike across the country. We will be thinking on Lebanon, NH and its gorgeous rivers and scenery as we continue on our journey.

ALL OUR LOVE, ♡
BIKE & BUILD ♡

GABBY RIVIERE
Avery Kowaleski
Masha Osipovitch
Kelly Smith
Elizabeth Pearl Krieger
Katelyn Anton
Saskia Kuehl
Gillian Kruter-Lee
Sara Olench
Patrick Wright
WOLF SCHUCHART
Nina
Laney Krieger
Elizabeth Wittunberg
Steve Barrella
Yutong Chen
Raquel Porsger
Ernesto Rosales
Julie Hernandez
Claire Davis
Lindsay Miller

THE ORDINATION OF ELIOT FAY

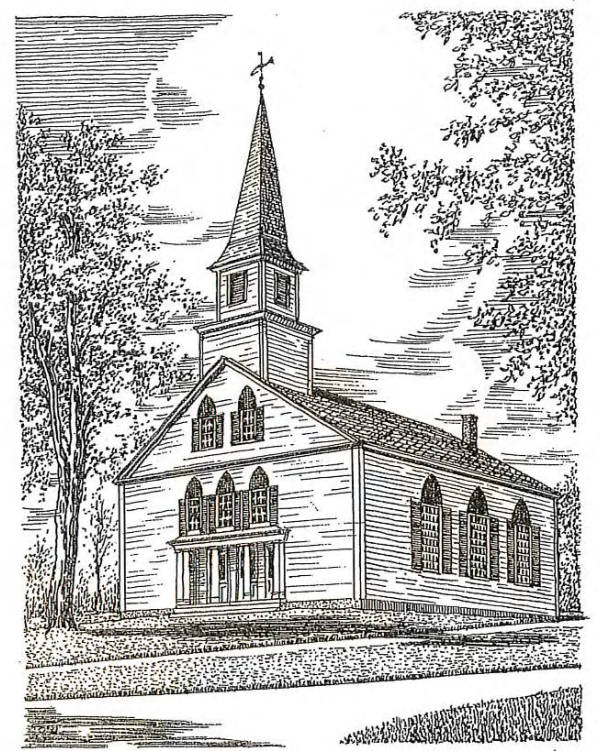
To the good folks of FCC,

Thank you so much for welcoming me and walking with me from the beginning of my association with the UCC and along the lengthy path to ordination. It was an honor to be able to celebrate the completion of that journey in your beautiful church, with so many of you present!

And thank you particularly for your help and support in making my ordination service a reality! Everything—from the gracious welcome before the service to all who came, to the wonderful reception afterward—is appreciated more than I can say. I was also completely surprised by your generous ordination gift and will put it to good use!

May the grace and peace of God be with you all, and thank you all again so very much for everything!

Eliot



Nelson Congregational Church ~ Nelson, New Hampshire



MUSIC AT THE MEETINGHOUSE



Music at the Meetinghouse

Classicopia in August

All in the Sanctuary. Masks, distanced seating, and vaccination required.

Classicopia: Summer Music Camp Faculty Concert—Friday, August 12, at 7:30 pm

Pianists Dan Weiser and Elizabeth Borowsky, along with Elizabeth's accomplished siblings, cellist Frances and violinist Emmanuel, are here for the week of August 8 leading Classicopia's newly revived summer camp for young musicians. The faculty will offer a special public concert with music of Max Bruch, Gabriel Fauré, Astor Piazzolla, and more; the camp's students will play a couple fun pieces as well. *Adults \$20, FCC members \$15, children free; for more, visit classicopia.org/concert/summer-music-camp-faculty-concert/.*

Classicopia: Summer Music Camp Student Concert—Saturday, August 13, at 10:00 am

All are invited to this performance by 21 young musicians participating all week in Classicopia's summer camp. *Free admission! For more, visit classicopia.org/concert/classicopia-summer-camp-student-concert/.*

Classicopia: Clara and Fanny—Saturday, August 20, at 7:30 pm

Dan Weiser welcomes back his friends Ralph Allen (violin) and Iris Jortner (cello) for piano trios by two preeminent composers of 19th-century Romanticism, Clara Schumann and Fanny Mendelssohn. While both were connected to better-known men, they and their music deserve to be celebrated on their own! *Adults \$20, FCC members \$15, children free; for more, visit classicopia.org/concert/clara-and-fanny/.*

*** * * Our *Fall Concert Schedule* is shaping up nicely—*Stay Tuned!* * * ***

Dear Brian and Steve and Everyone at FCC,

Thank you so much for allowing UVMC to use the church as a performance space. I'm writing today in reference to our **Sing & Play Festival** [on June 4], but of course it applies to the whole year. We're so grateful to have such a beautiful space for our students to perform in, and we're grateful for the warm welcome we receive from you.

Our festival was a big success this year, with approximately 300 students performing, 2000 in the audience [across the whole day, at various sites downtown], and another 100 watching online. We're so grateful to have this space and you all as part of the UVMC community!

Sincerely,
Erin Smith
Assistant Director
Upper Valley Music Center



YOU'RE INVITED

Congregational Listening Session—Your Participation Encouraged!

Monday, August 15, at 6:00 pm on Zoom (RSVP Requested)

All are invited to join this “listening session,” the second facilitated for FCC-Lebanon by the Revs. Gordon Rankin and Campbell Lovett from the NH Conference of the UCC.

These sessions are part of a process Church Council voted to pursue following this year's Annual Meeting, mainly prompted by some internal conflicts that had arisen over the past year. We asked for assistance from the NHC because we felt the concerns that had surfaced were beyond our capacity to manage on our own. The first session in April involved members of Council and our Pastor-Parish Relations Committee; this second session is meant to invite additional perspectives and voices. The NHC team will then develop a set of recommendations based on what they have heard in this process.

The range of possible topics is wide open. Our church is undergoing many different kinds of change and transition. Our volunteers and lay leaders feel stretched. Our church governance and communication structures and systems may not be as well suited to where we are today as they once were. Layered on top of this have been the challenges and stress of the pandemic, our long stretch without in-person worship and fellowship, the new world of remote worship, and more. How are you feeling about our worship and congregational life today? What are you looking forward to for the future? What is making you hopeful, making you anxious, or bringing you joy? Is there something church-related that's been bugging you, and you'd like to bring it to leadership's attention? Are there things you'd like to see done differently? Do you have suggestions for our pastor and staff, our deacons, or other church leaders?

Please know that we will do everything possible to make this Zoom session a safe and welcoming space for all concerned. Even if you think you have nothing in particular to share, you are still encouraged to attend. You may find that others' comments prompt you to contribute thoughts or suggestions that can help grow and strengthen our faith community, our worship experience, or our ministries and programs.

If you'd like to participate, please email Council Chair Jon Scott (jscottnh@comcast.net) or contact the church office, so that we can send you the Zoom link and a short “covenanting” document we will use to help guide our discussion. Rev. Rankin will provide additional background to open the session.

I look forward to seeing you on August 15 and hearing what you have to say.

Yours in Christ,

Jon Scott, Council Chair

jscottnh@comcast.net / 603-381-6933 / 603-298-8644)

P. S. If you are unable to attend, or uncomfortable sharing your thoughts in a group, I invite you to email me any comments, questions, or suggestions, ideally before the session on August 15, and please indicate whether you're comfortable having your input shared with the group.

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

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**STRENGTHEN
THE CHURCH**

Special UCC Offering

**Outdoor Service
on FCC Lawn**

Sunday, August 21, 10:00 (Rain Date 8/28)



**Music
at the
Meetinghouse**

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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

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