



Grace Notes

The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

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The Pastoral Perspective

Tanith Carey, a British journalist and author, once wrote in *The Spectator*, “The greatest delusion ever sold to us by modern advertising is not that we need to buy water in bottles or that rocks make good pets. It’s the delusion that we should expect to be happy all the time.”

Whoa. Don’t we have the right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”? Well, in truth, no.

The Declaration of Independence may have been an effective piece of propaganda, and Thomas Jefferson was a talented phrasemaker. But the Declaration was a political statement, not a foundation of government. In the United States, that role is fulfilled by the Constitution of 1787.

Sadly, nowhere in the Constitution are we promised “happiness.” Orderly government, sure. Even looking at writings that are older, truly universal, and more freighted with deep meaning—like the Bible—we find no promises of “happiness” as it is now often construed.

Now, I’m not a dour Calvinist offering a justification for why we should all be miserable, nor will I argue that Jesus wants us to toil all our days for nothing. What I believe is that the Bible wishes for us rich lives of meaning and purpose. Look at Jesus, what he did and what he taught. He was concerned about those without. Consider the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 and who is blessed and comforted. Peacemakers. Those who mourn. The meek. The poor. *All* are blessed, and that all includes you and me. *We* are blessed. But happiness, the kind we are promised in modern advertising, is not guaranteed.

Scripture recognizes that life is not a proverbial bed of roses. The truth is we will struggle. And we will experience loss. And we will die. When we read Ecclesiastes 3, we encounter a vision of life as a rich tapestry. Yes, we may laugh, and we may know joy—there are times for that, but no promise of never-ending happiness.

During these warm, slower weeks of summer, I invite you to reflect on what you can count on: God’s presence; God’s everlasting, boundless love; and God’s promises, to you, to me, to all of creation. It is this companionship that we so desperately need when the world seems confused, when things are spiraling out of control, when the waters threaten to flood us.

Yours faithfully, *Steve*

SUNDAY SERVICE

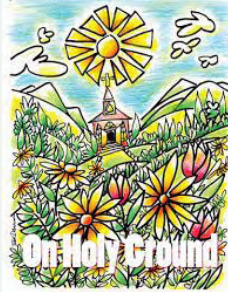
All Are Welcome to Worship at FCC
Sundays at 10:00 AM (In-Person/Zoom)
Coffee Hour (Usually!) Following
Zoom Greeters and Liturgists Needed

STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH

Special UCC Offering

This offering supports the growth of ministry and local congregations across the country. The theme for this year—“**On Holy Ground**”—suggests the goal of establishing new churches and supporting existing ones. Renewing faith communities and funding fellowships for young, emerging leaders in our church, this program is vital to our denomination’s health.

*Contributions welcome until Labor Day.
Please contribute as you are able. Thanks!*



Welcome Back, Gail Dimick!

The REV. GAIL T. DIMICK will be our guest preacher in August, as Rev. Steve Silver takes vacation. Many thanks to Gail for serving FCC once again with her experienced leadership of worship!



This year’s SHELTER SUNDAY collection raised \$1250—an increase of \$400 over last year’s total! We’re so grateful to have celebrated our fathers once again with such a generous donation to UPPER VALLEY HABITAT FOR HUMANITY.

SAVE THE DATE! KICK-OFF SUNDAY IS SEPTEMBER 10



SUMMER SCENES. A Father’s Day children’s moment for the Scott boys; another with guest preacher Bob Ross and some slightly older kids; Ranger Ron Bailey the Outing Club at Smith Pond; our new banner, with its expanded invitation.

JULY - AUGUST 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2 10a Worship (Communion; Gail Dimick, guest preacher)	3 (7p Leb Rec Concert Series: RAIN LOCATION)	4 <i>Independence Day</i> 11a F. Douglass Reading	5 2p Cameo Oak Hill Music Festival (arrives until 7/15)	6 10a-5p Oak Hill 7p NA Group (7p Leb Rec RAIN)	7 10a-5p Oak Hill	8 10a-5p Oak Hill 7:30p A Cappella Showcase: Family Feud
9 10a Worship (Bob Ross, guest preacher) 2-5p Oak Hill	10 10a-5p Oak Hill (7p Leb Rec RAIN) 7p Diaconate	11 10a-5p Oak Hill No Church Council	12 8a-4p NH-WIC 7p Oak Hill MF: Four Seasons	13 10a-5p Oak Hill 7p NA Group (7p Leb Rec RAIN)	14 7p Oak Hill MF: Music of Exile	15 10a Ben Kulp: Bach Solo Cello Suites
16 10a Worship	17 7p NH Music Festival Concert	18	19 2p Cameo	20 7p NA Group (7p Leb Rec RAIN)	21	22
23 10a Worship 2p Classicopia: Russian Cello	24 (7p Leb Rec RAIN)	25	26	27 11a-6p NH-WIC 7p NA Group (7p Leb Rec RAIN)	28	29
30 10a Worship	31 (7p Leb Rec RAIN)	1	2	3 7p NA Group (7p Leb Rec RAIN)	4	5 12:30p UVMC Community Sing
6 10a Worship (Communion; Gail Dimick, guest preacher)	7 (7p Leb Rec RAIN)	8 No Church Council	9 8a-4p NH-WIC	10 7p NA Group (7p Leb Rec RAIN)	11	12
13 10a Worship (Gail Dimick, guest preacher)	14 9a-3p Classicopia Music Camp (7p Leb Rec RAIN) No Diaconate	15 9a-3p Classicopia Music Camp	16 9a-3p Classicopia Music Camp	17 9a-3p Classicopia Music Camp 7p NA Group (7p Leb Rec RAIN)	18 9a-3p Classicopia Music Camp 7:30p Faculty Concert	19 9a-12p Classicopia Music Camp
20 10a Worship (Gail Dimick, guest preacher)	21 (7p Leb Rec RAIN)	22	23	24 11a-6p NH-WIC 7p NA Group (7p Leb Rec RAIN)	25	26
27 10a Worship (Gail Dimick, guest preacher)	28	29	30	31 7p NA Group	1	2
3 10a Worship (Communion)	4 <i>Labor Day</i>	5	6	7 7p NA Group	8	9

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 June **Diaconate** chair Linda Gerlach reported to Council on membership recruitment ideas. The Deacons have discussed ways to raise public visibility, including weeding projects on the Mascoma Greenway and painting sections of the fence around Colburn Park. FCC members could wear church T-shirts or caps while engaging in these activities. The Deacons also continue to plan for a new membership directory in some electronic format.

Board of Governors chair Walter Scott reported that the Parsonage insulation project was complete. The job came in under budget because of a decision to postpone blown insulation in the walls—doing so involves removal or replacement of old vinyl siding, a necessary but much more involved project. A final invoice for the insulation has not yet been received. Rev. Steve Silver noted that the work done in the basement has made a noticeable difference in humidity levels.

Several have noted the poor condition of the steps in front of the church, which were last painted roughly five years ago. It was generally agreed that we should investigate replacing these with more durable composite decking. While repairing the steps is a more pressing need, Walter added that he is revisiting the resurfacing of the front walk, a project that stalled last year as contractor plans fell through; he noted that including paving in the back parking lot would make the job more appealing to a contractor.

Walter also has replaced the flood lights on the front lawn with LED fixtures. Jon Scott commended the work that Nicole Mason and others had done on the Memorial Garden, and Linda Jacobs hired someone to clean the memorial stone itself.

Amid discussion of capital projects, **Trustees** chair Valerie Nevel called attention to the high proportion in our current income of endowment transfers, compared to stewardship collections. Traditional practice has been to fund about half our operating needs with investment income, but so far in 2023 it's been two-thirds of that amount. Still, there is some funding allocated for capital projects, and Jon and Steve both suggested that maintaining an escrow account would be advisable. Valerie also recommended tighter supervision of everyday operating expenses, such as online purchases and even mission spending.

Turning to an indoor need for the **Children's Community Corner**, Nan Parsons asked whether lighting in the central downstairs space could be improved. Some offered temporary fixes, but all agreed that it was an important priority to make the space more welcoming and usable, as we strive to attract new families to our membership.

Nan also reported on a successful **Children's Sunday** June 11, which she designed to be flexible enough to involve all kids regardless of their prior work. A good number were involved, and it was an appropriate celebration of the year. Nan spoke

quite positively about the Godly Play curriculum, which truly engaged the kids this year with its accessible approach. Inconsistent attendance remains frustrating, but she believes it was a very strong year overall. All thanked Nan again for her wonderful work with the children's program.

Jon Scott invited further reports or comments on "big questions" that should be on the table. Barb Jones pointed out the **bylaws review**, the **Pastor-Parish Relations Committee**, and resolution of staff compensation. Regarding the latter, Jon replied that the **Personnel Committee** had met with Steve and will submit a proposal for review, first by staff then Council. He has also arranged with Richard Paul CPA to rectify our application for IRS non-profit certification.

Steve affirmed the need for progress on our bylaws revision and asked that the PPRC hold a meeting with him prior to his going on vacation in August. Jon clarified the committee needs to have a preliminary planning meeting without Steve first, before a meeting with him. The congregation should be informed and asked for feedback for the PPRC, making it a positive and affirming process.

Committee Meetings

The following regular meetings will happen remotely via Zoom:

Diaconate	7/10 and 9/11, 7:00
Council	9/12, 7:00
MSA	8/28, 7:00

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

NEWS AND NOTES

Steve also reiterated his belief that we should launch a **campaign** soon, including (but not limited to) an upgrade of audio systems throughout the church. All agreed that audio in the Sanctuary is the highest priority, followed by the Parish Hall, outdoor services, and audio coordination with the downstairs space. Jon added that video capability in the Sanctuary should also be considered.

The group next discussed **summer meeting plans**, confirming that Council will not meet in either July or August. Jon assured everyone that any issue could be discussed by email or in person as needed. Valerie also noted that the Mission and Social Action Committee would not meet in June or July but would meet in the last week of August.

Valerie led several in commending Jon and Steve for the letter they had submitted to the *Valley News* (June 13) affirming FCC's support of **Pride Month** and the LOH Pride event on June 16. A new welcoming banner amplifying our support has been hung over the church's front door.

DIACONATE

Sue Pratt opened the Deacons' June meeting with prayer for freedom of expression, freedom of learning, and support of social acceptance. She noted both our local intentions to embrace all people and contrasted

that with recent efforts throughout the country to restrict expression and educational practices.

The Deacons shared **congregational care needs** for Juliet Steele, Ginny Bennett, the Sargents, and Jan Bergeron. They discussed creating a driver phone tree for home-bound congregants, for either rides to church or deliveries. Anyone who may need this service (or be willing to offer it) should contact the church office.

Rev. Steve Silver is lining up guest preachers for the Sundays he'll be away on vacation this summer (two Sundays in July and all of August). A retractable interior banner is on order, and examples of an updated information card are being reviewed. Steve noted the Children's Sunday service went well, and he reluctantly accepted kids' surprise recognition of his "saintly" character.

Considering FCC's **public image and engagement**, the Diaconate recommends that the front steps be repaired and repainted. Dawn Troutman has spoken with Lebanon Recreation director Paul Coates about church members doing service projects in town, such as weeding invasive plants along the rail trail or painting some sections of the Colburn Park fence. (Dates in September are possible.) The Deacons also discussed the possible production of T-shirts and hats with an FCC logo; Deb Scott has some contacts for production.

Bob Gerlach has been in touch with Anonymous Coffeehouse organizers about increasing publicity of FCC events with their audiences.

Bob also has spoken with Lebanon's Housing Authority about engaging with Lebanon Towers and Rogers House. Many activities once run by resident-organized associations have disbanded since the pandemic, and the City suggested leading activities of interest to FCC volunteers. Some possibilities include a Colburn Park picnic, a potluck at church, or an invitation to a baking lesson.

For a new **membership directory**, Deb Scott recommended starting with the contact information the church currently has, asking members if they would like to be included, and reaching out to get or take new photos. Deacons agreed to contact the members on their individually assigned lists.

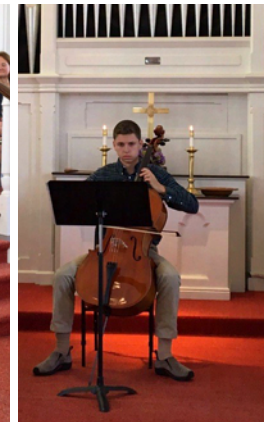
Phil Hammond noted that Children's Sunday again demonstrated a **need for mobile microphones**. Rev. Silver reported that a commitment is in place to redo the Sanctuary's audio system, and Deacons urged putting that recommendation in writing and making it a priority.

The Diaconate have also decided to discontinue language in our notices and advertising about "strongly encouraging" masks. Many feel this is outdated and possibly off-putting.

Subscribe to the NHC-UCC Weekly Newsletter

If you'd like to receive weekly news from the **NH Conference of the UCC**, including information about the Horton Center, the annual conference in October, and other topics, please contact communications@nhcucc.org.

THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION



Children's Sunday
June 11, 2023



Con-GRAD-ulations!

FCC joins in celebrating this spring's graduations! Whether from high school or college, and whether they have a close or distant connection to our congregation, we wish the new graduates ALL THE BEST in whatever they pursue next.



Katie Clancy (center) reacts to seeing her first-grade teacher during Lebanon HS graduation on June 8. Katie will be starting at Skidmore College this fall—we wish her well! (And we will miss her, too...)



FERVENT RHETORIC STILL RINGING TRUE. “What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July?” asked Frederick Douglass in 1852. “A day that reveals to him, more than all the other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the contact victim.” Some FCC members, including Jon and Deb Scott and Wendell Smith, joined on a rainy Fourth in Colburn Park in the annual reading of Douglass’ words—still relevant and inspirational today.



Supporting and Helping Asylees and Refugees

Founded in 2020, SHARE is a local nonprofit dedicated to bringing asylum seekers and refugees to the Upper Valley and helping them meet basic needs for housing, security, and community. SHARE funds legal assistance and connects families with resources for education, job training, and cultural navigation. Its volunteers share a commitment to respecting the refugees’ own goals, decisions, and resourcefulness.

If you’d like more information about SHARE’s work, activities, and ways to volunteer, visit sharevtnh.org or email sharevtnh@gmail.com.

Please join this vital local effort to welcome immigrants and refugees into our community.

Youth Treatment, Recovery, and Prevention Services



Second Growth strives to reduce substance abuse and violence among adolescents, working in schools and communities to offer training, counseling, group support, and prevention education. Its programs—including wellness education, suicide prevention efforts, and several summer camp sessions—build courage and resiliency skills to help young people navigate the challenges of adolescence.

If you’d like to learn more about Second Growth or donate, visit www.secondgrowth.org or contact director@secondgrowth.org.

MUSIC AT THE MEETINGHOUSE



Music
at the
Meetinghouse

Summer Concerts!

All in the Sanctuary. Masks welcome but optional.

A Cappella Showcase: Family Feud and Friends—Saturday, July 8, at 7:30 pm

Dan Signor and Gaye LaCasce, longtime leaders of the local *a cappella* community who moved to Virginia four years ago, return to the Upper Valley as Family Feud for a program with Fast Track, the Honeymooners, Jeff Russell, North Country Chordsmen, Valley Chords, and Vox Stars. *Free admission; donations welcome.*

Oak Hill Music Festival—Wednesday, July 12, and Friday, July 14, both at 7:00 pm

Having successfully launched this innovative festival a year ago, Hanover-born bassoonist Leah Kohn and her violinist husband Niv Ashkenazi return with other professional musicians for a week in residence at FCC. They'll play two concerts here—"Four Seasons" and "Music of Exile"—and a third in Norwich ("Chemistry") on Saturday, July 15. *Complete details, musician information, and ticket options at www.oakhillmusicfestival.com.*

Benjamin Kulp: J. S. Bach's Solo Cello Suites—Saturday, July 15, at 10:00 am

UV Music Center cellist Ben Kulp performs all six of these cornerstones of the solo cello repertoire. Those interested in deeper historical context may enroll in Mark Nelson's special "Preparing to Hear Masterworks" class on Thursdays, July 6 and 13, at 1:30. *Details TBD; more at uvmusic.org/event/ben-kulp-bach-solo-cello-suites.*

NH Music Festival Chamber Series—Monday, July 17, at 7:00 pm

Based in Plymouth and launching its 71st season, this highly regarded music festival expands this year with a series of excellent chamber-music concerts throughout the state. The program at FCC includes music for strings, winds, and piano by Iain Farrington, Ludwig van Beethoven, and Johannes Brahms. *Tickets (\$15-35) and more information at www.nhmf.org/2023-chamber-series/.*

Classicopia: The Russian Cello—Sunday, July 23, at 2:00 pm

Acclaimed cellist Alicia Ward joins pianist Dan Weiser for a program of impassioned music by Mily Balakirev, Dmitri Shostakovich, and Sergei Rachmaninov. *Adults \$20, FCC members \$15, children free; more at classicopia.org.*

Classicopia: Summer Music Camp Faculty Concert—Friday, August 18, 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 14 leading Classicopia's wonderful summer camp for young musicians. The faculty will offer this special public concert, and the camp's students will play a couple fun pieces as well. *Adults \$20, FCC members \$15, children free; more at classicopia.org.*

Classicopia: Summer Music Camp Student Concert—Saturday, August 19, at 10:00 am

All are invited to this celebratory performance by the vibrant young musicians participating all week in Classicopia's summer camp. *Free admission! More at classicopia.org.*

Register Now! Classicopia Summer Music Camp at FCC/UVMC—August 14-19, 9a-3p Daily

Instrumental and vocal instruction for students aged 8-18. *Details and registration at classicopia.org/summer-camp/.*

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

STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH *Special UCC Offering Through Labor Day*



Music
at the
Meetinghouse

Summer Concerts!

All in the Sanctuary. Masks welcome but optional.

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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