



Grace Notes

The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

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The Pastoral Perspective

Did you know that our modern calendar, with its once-every-four-years extra day at the end of February (unless it's a century year that is not evenly divisible by 400), was not just the product of a desire to keep the months aligned with the seasons? While that was one of the reasons that Julius Caesar implemented the original form of leap year during the century before Jesus was born, the intent of Pope Gregory XIII in 1582 was to properly calculate the date of Easter.

The Feast of the Resurrection, you will recall, is supposed to fall on the Sunday following the new moon after the vernal equinox, a decision made at the Council of Nicaea in 325. This ancient formula is why Easter roams the spring calendar, sometimes appearing in late March, other times at different points in April. Of course, true to form, the universal church has found different ways to perform this calculation—that's why we celebrate Easter on March 27 this year, but our friends in the Orthodox Church, still basing their calculations on the old Julian calendar, will do so on May 1.

Now, though, all of this may change. Early this year it was reported that Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, had agreed to talks proposed by Tawadros II, the leader of the Coptic Orthodox Church, to explore the idea of setting a fixed date for Easter, perhaps the second or third Sunday of April. Giving the conversation added impetus, Pope Francis last year expressed openness to the idea. Archbishop Welby told the *Daily Telegraph* of London that he hoped the issue might be resolved in the next five to ten years—though he noted that the first attempt to set a date was in the 10th century.

So, what to make of this? Honestly, my first reaction as a lover of church tradition was, "Why change things, especially if they have been done this way for almost 1,700 years?" Convenience for schedulers simply wasn't compelling to me. But I thought about the matter and the powerful statement of Christian unity that would result—with Anglicans, Copts (who use the Julian calendar), Catholics, and hopefully many others celebrating Easter on the same Sunday each and every year. I found myself feeling differently. History and tradition

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SUNDAY SERVICE

One Great Hour of Sharing SPECIAL MISSION OFFERING—MARCH 13

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is a nationwide offering organized by the UCC to benefit mission purposes throughout the country and the world. It supports health, education, refugee, agricultural, and emergency-relief initiatives in 138 countries. Funds raised by OGHS are leveraged with local, national, and global partners to maximize their impact.

Please consider giving as generously as you can to this important offering. Thank you!

Worship Transportation *A Congregational Service*

Some members of our congregation, for various reasons, have difficulty getting to Sunday worship on their own. Many others of us have plenty of room in our cars and could easily offer rides. It's time to get these two groups together!

If you need assistance getting to church on Sunday mornings, or if you're willing to give a ride to someone else who does, please contact the Church Administrator.

Our congregational life will be all the richer for this small but vital ministry!

EASTER COMMUNITY DINNER

Easter Sunday, March 27, 5:00 pm

Leader: JOHN GILLIATT

Thanks to John Gilliatt for leading this month's dinner, which falls on Easter Sunday. Please lend John a hand however you can, as we celebrate the Resurrection by offering this vital service to our neighbors. Look for sign-ups in the Parish Hall.

Never helped before but interested in trying? Make THIS your month!

Lenten Lunch Bag Offering Collection on Palm Sunday, March 20

On March 20 our Church School children hope again to collect lunch bags full of contributions for David's House and the children of San Jose Villanueva. Giving up a little change each day during Lent can mean a lot of change for these beneficiaries after Easter!

Queued for Coffee Hour

March—Diaconate

April—Mission and Social Action

May—Women of the Church

June—Board of Governors

FLOWERS FOR EASTER

We will once again adorn the Sanctuary with flowers for Easter morning, and you are invited to contribute in honor or memory of family and friends. You may either order flowers through the church office or supply your own; **in either case**, please fill out a dedication form and return it to the office.

Dedications will appear in the bulletin on Easter Sunday, March 27.

In addition to lilies (6" @ \$10, or 8" @ \$13), we offer begonias (6" @ \$13), daffodils (8" @ \$13), and tulips (8" @ \$13).

Orders through the church office must be placed by noon on MONDAY, MARCH 7 (payment gratefully accepted beyond that date). All dedication information must be received by noon on WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23. If you're donating your own flowers, please deliver them to church by Saturday, March 26.

MARCH 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28 9a Bible Study: Galatians 3 10a Worship and Church School 11:15a Bd of Govs 11:30a Shaping One's Legacy 5p Community Dinner	29 3p WCBH After-School Group 6:15p Cub Scouts (Bears)	1 5:45p Cub Scouts (Wolves/Tigers) 7p Boy Scouts	2 6p UVPRN 7p Lenten Faith Formation: Talking About Death	3 7p Choir	4	5 8a Men's Breakfast 10a Juneberry Music School (<i>last of session</i>) 7p Violin Recital: Students of Kathy Andrew
6 9a Bible Study: Galatians 4 10a Worship (Communion) and Church School 11:15a MSA 4p Choir Festival 7:30p Voice Recital: Angela Biggs	7 6:15p Cub Scouts (Bears)	8 5:45p Cub Scouts (Wolves/Tigers) 7p Boy Scouts	9 8a-4p NH-WIC 6p UVPRN 7p Lenten Faith Formation: Images of Death 7p Christian Ed Committee	10 9:30a-4p Grafton-Orange-Sullivan Assn 7p Choir	11	12
13 9a Bible Study: Galatians 5 10a Worship and Church School (One Great Hour)	14 3p WCBH After-School Group 6:15p Cub Scouts (Bears) 7p Diaconate	15 5:45p Cub Scouts (Wolves/Tigers) 7p Church Council 7p Boy Scouts/Troop Committee	16 6p UVPRN 7p Lenten Faith Formation: Requiem: Death in Music	17 7p Choir	18	19 8a Breakfast Discussion of Alternative Witness to UCC Resolutions
20 PALM SUNDAY 9a Bible Study: Galatians 6 10a Worship (Liturgy of the Palms) and Church School	21	22	23 APRIL NEWSLETTER CONTENT DUE 6p UVPRN	24 MAUNDY THURSDAY 10a-6p NH-WIC 7p Service of Tenebrae	25 GOOD FRIDAY 12-3p Seven Last Words 7p Service of Word and Prayer	26 10a Juneberry Music School (<i>first class of Spring Session</i>)
H O L Y W E E K						
27 EASTER SUNDAY 6a Sunrise Service 6:30-8a Easter Breakfast 10a Festival Worship and Church School 5p Community Dinner	28 3p WCBH After-School Group 6:15p Cub Scouts (Bears)	29 5:45p Cub Scouts (Wolves/Tigers) 7p Boy Scouts	30 6p Headrest Family Workshop 6p UVPRN	31 7p Choir	1	2 8a Men's Breakfast 10a Juneberry Music School

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

COMMITTEE NOTES

2016 ANNUAL MEETING

A quorum of our congregation attended the 2016 Annual Meeting after worship on February 14, moderated by Warren Belding.

In his **Pastor's report**, Rev. Steve Silver highlighted three areas of challenge and opportunity in the coming year. First is to consider whether our organizational structure most effectively serves our congregation's participation, commitment, and strengths. The second is two anniversaries in the near future—the 500th of the Protestant Reformation (2017) and the 250th of our own congregation (2018)—which ask us to look at our past while going forward. Third is faith formation, the directed work toward growing deeper in our faith and spirituality.

Steve also extended thanks to Barry Schuster, concluding his term as Council chair and starting as our interim Treasurer; Nan Parsons, finishing her service as Treasurer; and Don Rowell, concluding his service as chair of the Board of Governors.

For **Church Council**, outgoing chair Barry Schuster thanked all those who come to Council regularly, address issues, and offer their service in the “democratic” process of our church. He also expressed confidence in Corrine Erskine as she starts her term as Council chair.

Relative to the **Clerk's report**, Rachel Silver pointed out that

nine members had joined the church in 2015, rather than eight, as incorrectly reported in the 2015 Annual Report.

Adding to the **Board of Governors** report, Wendell Smith expressed our hope to move forward with an energy-efficient hot-water system for the kitchen.

For the **Board of Trustees**, Valerie Nevel offered a few remarks about the church's investment strategies, then read the list of names of those who have arranged for ongoing funding for the church in their memorial gifts.

For the **Diaconate**, Barb Jones thanked all the Deacons for their support and service throughout the year. She also welcomed new Deacon Kathy Beckett and pointed out that we still are two short of the ideal number of twelve.

Jon Scott added to his **Stewardship** report by emphasizing how our members and friends contribute so much more than financial support to sustain the church and its ministries. Our collective volunteer hours and love for the church and its mission represent an abundant source of strength. Jon also promoted the February 28 planned giving session to be led by Valerie Nevel.

Referring to the **Nominating Committee's** roster for the coming year, Amy Driscoll invited everyone to share any questions, concerns, or corrections they might have. While acknowledging remaining

vacancies, she encouraged everyone for their commitment and service, thanking in particular those who were finishing terms as officers or committee members. The slate of nominations passed unanimously.

As the **proposed budget for 2016** had been distributed in draft form to Church Council in the prior two weeks, no significant discussion occurred in the Annual Meeting. The budget passed unanimously.

Jon Scott introduced the Deacons' proposal for an **alternative witness to the UCC “Boycott and Divest” resolutions** with background on these resolutions and the process that led to their adoption by the UCC and NH Conference. He reiterated principles that guided the Diaconate's proposal and emphasized concerns about the approval process.

Jon reported that **the Diaconate had found it advisable, based on recent feedback, to table the proposed recommendation**. All recognize that this is a complicated set of issues; there has already been much consideration and careful discernment, but there remains a need for broader congregational review and input. Thus, two congregational forums on this matter are planned in the near future, followed by a congregational vote in mid-May. Jon invited more discussion from those present.

Linda Jacobs, speaking for FCC's delegates to the NH Conference, pointed out that there was a discussion and vote at the NHC

COMMITTEE NOTES

annual meeting, suggesting a democratic process. Steve Silver clarified that the vote came only at the end of a rushed process and followed a typical pattern, by which planning and discussion of the resolution was essentially biased toward a particular position before it reached the annual meeting.

Ron Bailey expressed concern that the Diaconate's own process should have involved the wider congregation earlier. He hoped to hear more from our delegates and wanted to know more about where the proposed response would go. How would we take this message beyond FCC? By what mechanisms would we voice our alternative witness and criticism?

Steve Silver noted that the Deacons had followed the example of our conversations about a new welcome statement a few years ago, although perhaps that didn't guarantee success in this case. Barry Schuster added that the Diaconate had appropriately brought the proposal to Council, which recommended wider congregational discussion. It's clear that more is still needed, and Barry welcomed a substantive exchange on this issue.

Jon Scott expressed the hope that we focus on what we agree on, rather than potential points of contention. Hilary Ryder asked everyone to convey any further comments and questions to the Diaconate sooner rather than later, in order to keep the process moving forward.

Steve Teeter asked whether other NHC congregations would be involved in the conversation. Jon agreed that might be beneficial, but only *after* we clarify what our congregation believes.

After the singing of "Blest Be the Tie That Binds," Steve Silver shared his gratitude and joy for the many strengths and gifts of our church family. Whenever he is engaged in wider-church work, he is proud to tell others about our congregation. Steve offered a benediction, and the meeting adjourned at 12:15.

A delightful potluck lunch and warm fellowship followed.

DIACONATE

At their February 15 meeting, the Deacons elected Barb Jones, Barb Teeter, and Ginger Smith to remain as chair, vice-chair, and treasurer, respectively. New deacon Kathy Beckett was appointed clerk of the Diaconate. The group spent time signing cards for Carolin Bassett, who is taking some time off from choir; Trish Heatherton, who badly broke her wrist after slipping on ice; and Kathie Schuster, in appreciation for the beautiful altar arrangements she generously provides.

There was brief discussion about the need to mentor greeters and ushers. Deacons also addressed **challenges of using the Parish Hall** as a worship space and accommodating more people attending services. Steve noted that we will be returning to the Sanctuary on Palm Sunday.

From the Nominating Committee

Volunteer Opportunities Still Available!

As we've begun a new term for our volunteer committees, Council and the Nominating Committee ask you to consider how you might best contribute your own skills, interests, and energy to our church's mission and ministry.

If you're interested in learning about a particular committee or available opportunities for service and ministry, **please contact the church office, or Amy Driscoll (603-448-0976/ amykdriscoll@gmail.com) or Barry Schuster (603-448-5937/ ivylegal@gmail.com).**

March Meetings

Mission/Social Action and Stewardship	3/6, 11:15
Christian Education	3/9, 7:00
Diaconate	3/14, 7:00
Church Council	3/15, 7:00
Board of Governors	3/27, 11:15

April Meetings

Mission/Social Action and Stewardship	4/3, 11:15
Diaconate	4/11, 7:00
Christian Education	4/13, 7:00
Church Council	4/19, 7:00
Board of Governors	4/24, 11:15

COMMITTEE NOTES

The Deacons also considered the process of serving **communion by distribution**. It was suggested that more instruction may be necessary to smooth the process.

After the discussion at the Annual Meeting, the Deacons planned **next steps for their proposal regarding the UCC resolutions**. Two forums will be offered to the congregation. The first will take place on March 19 over breakfast, inviting ideas for wording and our hopes for follow-up to the document; the second forum will happen in April.

The Deacons also considered how to **invite members of the now-defunct Quechee Church** to worship and participate at FCC, in part by using Quechee's church directory. Jon Scott suggested sending them invitations to Holy Week services.

Deacons will redistribute their individual **member lists** at their March meeting. Each Deacon will also have a full list of members.

There was further discussion about processing the **Sunday offering**. Susan Montmagny has been doing this each week but is unable to continue. Council will determine an alternative solution.

In his **UVIP report**, Steve Teeter noted that the Lead Organizer position was being filled. Kathy Beckett reported that FCC was officially welcomed as a new member of UVIP at its annual meeting. The Economic Justice Team continues to work on the Fight For 15 and alternatives to predatory lending.

Biff Simpson and Hillary Ryder are working on the **"Movie Night"**

idea. Hilary asked for help with food (e.g. hot dogs, popcorn), to be served "picnic style." It's hoped that this program will start soon.

In his **pastor's report**, Steve Silver recounted his travel to Cleveland for the UCC Historical Council meeting in January, the "warm and welcoming" neutral pulpit we hosted on January 31, and the ecumenical Ash Wednesday service in West Lebanon. He celebrated an "excellent" Annual Meeting day. Steve and four others from FCC will attend Prepared to Serve on February 20. He encouraged everyone to participate in a wide array of Lenten events.

Steve added that Jo Shelnett is now serving as Interim Minister in Tunbridge, VT, while Mark Rowell is serving as Interim Pastor in Post Mills, VT.

Our Alternative Witness to the UCC "Boycott and Divest" Resolutions

From the Annual Meeting Warrant: The Diaconate and Church Council recommend that the church vote to offer an alternative witness locally, regionally, and nationally to the resolutions of the 30th General Synod of the United Church of Christ and the NH Conference of the UCC to "boycott and divest" from companies doing business in the West Bank, and to the process that led to these resolutions.

Our witness calls for peace in the Middle East, pursued in ways that do not vilify Israelis and Jews at home or abroad, but instead promote and bring about real and lasting peace in the region.

Amid general agreement that more congregational discussion is required, this proposal was tabled at the 2016 Annual Meeting. The Diaconate will be holding two open conversations for any questions, concerns, and suggestions from members of the congregation (see below).

It is hoped to bring a revised proposal forward for a congregational vote in mid-May.

QUESTIONS? All are invited to discuss this important issue directly with Diaconate members. The resolutions themselves and other relevant documents are available for review on the church website.

CONGREGATIONAL BREAKFAST DISCUSSION: Saturday, March 19, 8:30-9:45 am
We look forward to hearing your questions, concerns, and suggestions. All are welcome!

THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION

Midwinter Scenes: Scout Sunday; Debbie Jillette gets “ashes to go” on her way to work; a sumptuous potluck lunch after Annual Meeting; the All Baroque group plays to a full audience; kids worship in the Parish Hall in the morning and serve Community Dinner in the evening.



LENT AND HOLY WEEK 2016

LENT IS A TIME FOR US TO REFLECT upon our relationship with God, to examine our walk with Jesus, and to take stock of our lives as we prepare for the great miracle and gift of Easter.

LENT IS A TIME TO LOOK WITHIN our souls and hearts, to set aside those things that separate us from God and God's people.

LENT IS A TIME TO JOURNEY into the wilderness, so that we may fully enter into the New Creation.

Journey with us during Lent this year in study, reflection, service, and worship.

ENGAGING THE WORD, FORMING OUR FAITH

Sundays through March 20, 9:00 am—Six Weeks, Six Chapters: A Lenten Study of Galatians

Dip your toes into the living water of Scripture in this Lenten Bible Study. We will read a chapter of Galatians each week and discuss our impressions, while learning a bit more about Paul and his message to the church.

Wednesdays in March, 7:00 pm—Death and Dying... And Living: A Faith Formation Series

The only activities in life that have guaranteed 100% participation are birth and death. While we have no control over how we come into this world, we have great power to shape how we approach the end of our lives. Through word, art, and music, we will explore ways that Christians can think about death that are rooted in faith, affirm life, and enable us to grow closer to God.

March 9—Images of Death in Sacred and Secular Art

An exploration and discussion with Brian Clancy of some of the ways artists have portrayed death and dying across the centuries.

March 16—Requiem: Death and Dying in Music

A session led by Steve Silver exploring how music, from grand requiem masses to intimate spirituals, has prepared the faithful for the end of life.

SHARING GOD'S BOUNTY WITH OUR SISTERS AND BROTHERS

Sunday, March 13—One Great Hour of Sharing

A special, nationwide mission offering for health, education, refugee, agricultural, and emergency-relief initiatives around the world.

Sunday, March 20—Church School Lenten Lunch Bag Collection

A special annual offering that supports David's House and the children of San Jose Villanueva, El Salvador. Children distributed bags on the first Sunday of Lent and will collect them on Palm Sunday.

Sunday, March 27, 5:00 pm—Easter Community Dinner at FCC

Our monthly dinner for neighbors and friends, which this year falls on Easter Sunday.

LENT AND HOLY WEEK 2016

JOINING IN WORSHIP: THE JOURNEY OF HOLY WEEK

MARCH 20—PALM SUNDAY

10 am: Liturgy of the Palms, Sanctuary
(Steve Silver will preach on Luke 19:28-40,
“Paving the Way”)

MARCH 24—MAUNDY THURSDAY

7 pm: Service of Communion and Tenebrae,
Stripping of the Altar
(Steve Silver will preach on 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, “Table Talk”)

MARCH 25—GOOD FRIDAY

12-3 pm: Quiet Meditation on the Seven Last Words, Sanctuary
7 pm: Service of the Word and Prayer, Sanctuary
(Steve Silver will preach on Hebrews 10:16-25, “Hope from Hopelessness”)

MARCH 27—EASTER SUNDAY

6 am: Ecumenical Sunrise Service, Colburn Park
6:30 am: Community Breakfast to benefit Second Growth, Parish Hall
10 am: Festival Worship Service and Church School (with Easter Egg Hunt!)
(Steve Silver will preach on John 20:1-8, “Look Closely”)
5 pm: Easter Community Dinner

The **Pastoral Perspective**, *continued from Page 1*

are wonderful, but they are not what God calls us to make our priority. Rather, we are called to be one, as Jesus says in John 17:21. As followers of Christ, we are to bridge divides, to find those things that unite us, to reach out to others to build the Kingdom of God.

As we prepare for Easter, I hope and pray that we will reflect on and pray over how we might be agents of reconciliation and promoters of Christian unity, in our congregation, our community, and the wider world. Doing so will help us show that we have heard the call of the One whose triumph over darkness, despair, and, yes, division, we will celebrate on March 27.

Yours faithfully,

Steve

MUSIC AT THE MEETINGHOUSE



Music at the Meetinghouse

Spring Concerts Coming Soon!

All in the Sanctuary, First Congregational Church

Three Concerts with Classicopia

Now in its fifteenth year under the leadership of Marcia Colligan and Daniel Weiser, Classicopia offers an engaging combination of brilliant musicianship and informative discussion in a relaxed atmosphere.

Sunday, April 10, at 1:00 pm—Four-hand Piano, with Philip Liston-Kraft (*Program TBA*)

Sunday, May 1, at 1:00 pm—Violin/Viola and Piano, with Tim Schwarz (*Program TBA*)

Sunday, May 22, at 1:00 pm—Violin and Piano, with Roseminna Watson (*Program TBA*)

A Cappella Showcase with Harmony Night—Saturday, June 11, at 7:00 pm

William Ögmundson: New Music for Piano—Friday, June 24, at 7:30 pm (Details Soon!)

10TH BIENNIAL LEBANON-AREA CHOIR FESTIVAL

Sunday, March 6, at 4:00 pm—FCC Sanctuary

All are cordially invited to this biennial celebration of church choral music in the Upper Valley! Area choirs will sing their own pieces before joining for a memorable program directed by Hal Sheeler. Music of Mendelssohn, Stephen Paulus, Moses Hogan, John Rutter, Alice Parker, and many others!

A free-will offering will be received in support of Listen and the Upper Valley Haven.

PLEASE JOIN US—ALL ARE WELCOME!

Do you like to sing? Do you want to improve vocal skills and sing in a choir without performance pressure? Would you like to connect with others and improve your health in a choral setting?



Juneberry Music helps people of all ages and backgrounds develop choral singing skills in a fun, affordable way. We welcome you wherever you are, whether completely inexperienced or more comfortable and ready to challenge yourself. Participants encounter music from across centuries and cultures, while gaining the skills and confidence to sing in church choirs, community choruses, and other groups.

Saturday Mornings at FCC, March 26 through May 21

First Class 10:15-11:30, Skills Class 11:15-12:30 / Final session in Thetford on **Sunday, May 22**

\$90 for full ten-week course, \$12 for drop-in per session

For more information or to register, please visit www.juneberrymusic.com or contact director Patricia Norton (juneberrymusic@gmail.com/802-785-4740).

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