



Grace Notes

The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

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The Pastoral Perspective

“Where are we going?”

“Are we there yet?”

Perhaps these questions ring a bell. I’m thinking about them in the context of summer road trips, but the truth is these apply to larger issues that we encounter in our lives. Do we actually know where we’re going in life? Do we know when we’ve arrived? We may have a plan, or at least a sense of where we’re heading with a job or relationship, but it’s not always clear, is it? Sometimes it seems as if we’re flailing about, just trying to make ends meet or taking care of the task immediately before us. Dreaming is something we have no time for.

But it is our dreams that make life so worthwhile. Our dreams, our hopes, our aspirations are signs that we wish to do more with what God has given us. So, we dream of a better world, of an outbreak of peace, of giving thanks for all we have received.

Jesus was, among other things, a dreamer, one who held fast to the promise of the Kingdom of God. He shared this vision with his followers. And it was so compelling that they gave everything to help it come to pass. And they shared it with others, including you and me.

We know the disciples were not perfect. They had egos. They jostled for position, and often looked at how they would benefit. In short, they were like you and me.

And yet...

God worked with these people, these men and women of faith who were called. God gave them dreams, not delusions, that would reshape their lives.

He gave you and me the ability to dream, too. And while it might be pleasing to imagine we will win the next PowerBall drawing, is that what we really want? Would that bring us true happiness?

I don’t think so. Our familiar problems would just be displaced by new problems.

Continued on Page 4

SUNDAY SERVICE

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

In-person worshippers 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.

Children's Sunday is June 12!

Kids Lead Worship with Readings and Music Presentations to Children and Volunteers

Join us for our annual celebration of the **Children's Community Corner!** The children will share some of what they've learned throughout the year.

If you're interested in participating or have questions, please contact Nan Parsons (nlp3721@yahoo.com/603-863-8354).

Upstanders for the Children of Ukraine Special Mission Project for Children's Sunday

Concerned about the children caught amid the tragedies of war in Ukraine, FCC's kids want to help! They have decided to make Ukrainian-style eggs, cross necklaces, and baked goods to offer the congregation for a donation on Children's Sunday.



Delivery may be arranged for those who'd like something but cannot attend church that day.

All donations will be sent to a reputable charity providing resources for the children of Ukraine. Please contact Nan

Parsons with questions and delivery requests.

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.

FCC Outing Club—Shaker Trails

SUNDAY, JUNE 5, 1:00 PM

Ron Bailey leads a spring expedition of our Outing Club—a chance for members of our congregation and friends to explore the beauty of God's creation together. This time we'll enjoy a network of trails in Enfield rich with Shaker history, which was first used to manage an impressive canal system and dam.

Meet at 1:00 pm at the trailhead lot off Route 4A, just beyond the Shaker Museum and opposite Landing Road. Bring water, sunscreen, bug/tick spray, and a snack if desired—we may well finish with ice cream at the Baited Hook!

All are invited—and bring a friend!

Many Thanks for Mothers and Blankets!

Blanket Sunday this year brought in almost \$900 of contributions from our generous congregation and friends, honoring mothers and mother-figures past and present. Thank you all so much!

For more information about the CWS Blankets program, please visit cwsblankets.org.



NEWS AND NOTES

CHURCH COUNCIL

Jon Scott began Council's April meeting by asking members to check in about their **experience of Holy Week**. Several shared their hope of engaging with the narrative and diverse emotions of the week, and the challenges of doing so amid the ongoing activities of life. The Rev. Steve Silver expressed his hope that the congregation would participate in our traditional schedule of Holy Week services, which are rich with meaning and deepen the experience of Easter.

Jon added his appreciation of the recent prayer service for **Ukraine**, which he and several others were able to attend on Zoom (along with a decent number in person). Steve noted that the children of FCC are also concerned about Ukraine and will be doing a fundraiser of some kind in conjunction with Children's Sunday on June 12.

Turning to more mundane church business, Council next approved a Finance Committee proposal for \$40,000 of **capital project funding**, for which Trustee chair Valerie Nevel was investigating the availability of Dole Trust funds. Half the amount, for the Parsonage insulation project, was already approved in the 2022 budget; the other half would be for replacing the front walk of the church. John Gilliatt explained that its condition has been deteriorating for several years, and attempts to patch it have not provided long-term solutions. The Board of Governors has gotten a reasonable estimate from a concrete contractor, and the work could happen as soon as

May. John also noted the hope of removing the large yew bushes on the front lawn and replacing them with something more attractive and manageable.

Jon Scott then introduced a policy proposal, based on discussions among the Diaconate, Rev. Silver, and others, for **continued mask use at FCC** for both worship and non-FCC events, recommending that we follow the policies of local hospitals. Council approved an exception for our choir and other performers to remove masks while singing. Brian Clancy noted that a number of performers had already sung maskless for some time, without issue; he also noted that some other venues relaxed their rules several weeks earlier. (For comparison, Linda Jacobs explained that masks are now optional for audiences at Lebanon Opera House, though performers may request that all wear masks if they prefer.) Linda Gerlach confirmed the Diaconate's full support of the policy, wanting to offer some relief while respecting the continued safety of our older demographic and the children of our congregation. Council voted to approve the policy, and we will revisit and adjust it monthly as needed.

Jon re-introduced **NH Conference Minister Gordon Rankin**, who welcomed his colleague Campbell Lovett. Revs. Rankin and Lovett hoped to clarify issues to ensure that FCC is getting what it wants and needs from this consultation process. No one wants to make more of the present issues than we need

to, although Gordon noted that there may be larger issues that we would benefit from identifying and acknowledging. He and Campbell explained that the process should include learning to communicate disagreement in a covenantal manner—part of a healthy congregational system is the ability to have an open, healthy conversation and listen to one another carefully. All affirmed the need for an opportunity to share information and take responsibility in an appropriate way, and since many remain unaware of the issues or concerns themselves, all agreed to avoid side conversations and rumors. Gordon shared a set of principles for healthy and safe discussion.

DIACONATE

Linda Gerlach opened the April Deacons' meeting with St Francis of Assisi's prayer for peace, before the group discussed a series of **congregational care** items. A prayer shawl has been sent to Sue Pratt, who was to undergo surgery and plans to return to the Upper Valley by mid-May. Valerie Nevel has been recovering well, gaining mobility with physical therapy. Rev. Steve

Committee Meetings

The following regular meetings will happen remotely via Zoom:

Diaconate 5/9 and 6/13, 7:00

Council 5/10 and 6/14, 7:00

For information about other groups' plans to meet in person or online, please contact the church office.

NEWS AND NOTES

Silver has visited Jan Bergeron at Hanover Terrace, and several shared concern for Carolin Bassett as well. We are also trying to ascertain the availability of Larry Doyle's family for a memorial service. Lastly, Steve is confirming city requirements for performing the Callahan baptisms at Storrs Hill (later in the spring, when the weather allows).

Rev. Silver further reported that the Ukraine prayer service was well received, and the Children's Community Corner is proposing a fundraiser for Ukraine's children in conjunction with Children's Sunday on June 12. He was very pleased to see so many congregants attend worship in person on Palm Sunday and Easter. The presence of children at those services was particularly gratifying.

As we consider changing covid circumstances, Steve asked for the Deacons' thoughts regarding our continuation of in-person safety precautions. The consensus was to err firmly on the side of caution and continue to require masks. The Deacons further discussed ways to make all visitors feel welcome, such as encouraging everyone to wear name tags, for example.

HOLY WEEK AT FCC. The journey from Palm Sunday through the Passion to Easter brought kids and adults (along with a moose and a lobster) back to the Sanctuary; a more modest group gathered at sunrise in Colburn Park.



The Pastoral Perspective, *continued from Page 1*

The Kingdom, however, is another matter. The Kingdom of Heaven, of God's rule on earth, is something we may never see fully delivered in our lifetime, but it is real and it is tangible, and it is something we can help God build.

So why wait? Why get edgy or testy? Why spin our proverbial wheels? Together, we can do God's work. Together, we can journey towards the future God has in store for us. Together, we can dream.

Yours faithfully,

Steve

What's WIC? *Resuming in-person clinics at FCC after 26 months of remote care*

In 2014 First Congregational Church started hosting bi-monthly clinics of the Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition Program—popularly known as WIC. Subject to income guidelines, families can obtain free health screenings, nutritional advice, breastfeeding support, and service referrals. (And despite WIC's name, fathers utilize its services, too!) An itinerant program with limited resources, WIC depends on sites across the state that offer enough space for its clinics at minimal cost.

Like all other in-person events, though, these clinics shut down in March 2020. And on May 11, staff from the Belknap-Merrimack Community Action Program, which operates WIC clinics in Grafton County, will finally return to FCC.

Practicing responsible healthcare and nutrition can be challenging for any family, but without WIC's help it would be impossible for many parents with limited means, working multiple jobs. WIC offers them vital assistance, and they in turn are tremendously grateful. "Thanks to WIC," says a typical client, "my children's health is on track."

By offering this program the space it needs, our congregation extends the love and compassion that Christ asked us to share with each other.

For more information, call 800-WIC-4321 or visit www.dhhs.nh.gov. Or call Belknap-Merrimack CAP at 603-225-2050/800-578-2050.

The NH Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

In addition to operating WIC clinics in Grafton County, the Belknap-Merrimack Community Action Program manages CSFP, a free healthy-food program for eligible seniors. This state-funded resource offers up to \$50 worth of food monthly to anyone aged 60 years or older who needs help stretching their food budget.

For more details about CSFP, including the required income guidelines, see the brochures in the Parish Hall or contact Belknap-Merrimack CAP (see phone numbers at left).

The Children's Community Corner Thanks You

This year's LENTEN LUNCH BAG OFFERING brought in \$995! We'll round that up to \$1000 and divide it between helping families who find refuge at WISE's safe house and awarding scholarships through Epilogos Charities to the schoolchildren of San Jose Villanueva, El Salvador. *Many thanks to our generous congregation!*



THE NH STATE BUTTON SOCIETY held its 70th-anniversary spring expo here in April—its first since 2019.



THANKS FOR SHARING!

We're grateful to report that our congregation gave \$1,442 this spring to One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS)—not a record, but still well above our average collection! With this donation we support worldwide initiatives in healthcare, education, agriculture, and refugee and emergency assistance. OGHS may be the most vital UCC mission campaign of the year, and we're proud to support it. *Many thanks!*

Bike & Build Returns to FCC!

TUESDAY TO THURSDAY, JUNE 14-16



After a two-year, pandemic-induced hiatus, a group of young adults from BIKE & BUILD will return to FCC next month. Familiar to many in our congregation, this program advocates and raises funds for affordable-housing reform. Riders on its cross-country routes work with Habitat for Humanity and local organizations on a variety of home-repair and construction projects, meeting with community members along the way to discuss housing-related issues. To participate, each of these spirited, enterprising twenty-somethings raises at least \$4,000 to support costs and the program's grant-making foundation.

Since 2003, over 3,800 biker-builders have generated more than \$6.6 million, contributed about 255,000 hours of labor, and pedaled over 11 million miles, biking from site to site while raising awareness of our national housing crisis.

Starting in Portsmouth and finishing in late August in Bellingham, WA, Bike & Build's Northern Route has stopped in Lebanon almost since its beginning, staying at FCC since 2008. The group sleeps and eats meals here but spends its "build day" working with Upper Valley Habitat and Cover Home Repair.

How can you help? As in the past, FCC has committed to provide the biker-builders two dinners and a breakfast while they're here. Due to our ongoing COVID precaution, however, we have not yet determined how our congregation will serve and engage with the group. **If you would like to offer help planning or serving meals, please contact the church office. For more about this inspiring program, its mission and impact, and the riders on the Northern US Route, please visit bikeandbuild.org.**



A WEALTH OF MUSIC AT THE MEETINGHOUSE. Classicopia's Dan Weiser and Roseminna Watson performed a phenomenal concert of music by women composers; a trio led by flautist Leslie Stroud offered a benefit for the International Rescue Committee's work with refugees in Ukraine and Poland; and Bel Canto Chamber Singers shared a superb program in its return to FCC's Sanctuary for the first time since December 2019.

MUSIC AT THE MEETINGHOUSE



Music at the Meetinghouse

Upcoming Concerts at FCC

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

The Anonymous Coffeehouse—Fridays, May 6 and 20, at 7:30 pm

Come enjoy our popular community venue for live local music—with two shows left before it breaks for the summer! Baked goods and non-alcoholic drinks are available, all free of charge. *For more, visit anoncoffee.org.*

Nicolas Babineau and Alexis Chartrand—Saturday, May 7, at 7:00 pm

UVMC and Vermont Violins bring us this talented duo, who explore the Québécois musical universe with fiddle, guitar, and foot percussion, offering an intimate and truly contemporary vision of the repertoire. *Adults \$15 (or \$25 with afternoon workshop), under 18 free; for more details, visit uvmusic.org.*

Classicopia: Jewish Broadway—Sunday, May 15, at 1:00 pm

Violinist Tim Schwarz and pianist Dan Weiser follow up last year's wildly popular "Broadway Violin" concert with a prequel featuring Broadway's golden years, in tunes by Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, Harold Arlen, and George Gershwin. *Adults \$20, FCC members \$15, children free; for more, visit classicopia.org.*

Cameo Baroque Benefit: Music of Johann Sebastian Bach—Saturday, May 21, at 7:00 pm

Our own Ernie Drown brings his excellent ensemble back for an evening celebrating the master of Baroque music. *Free-will donation (\$20 suggested) to benefit the important work of Doctors Without Borders in Ukraine. For more information, please visit cameoarts.org or doctorswithoutborders.org.*

Roseminna Watson, Violin, and Melody Fader, Piano—Sunday, May 22, at 2:00 pm

Having shared a wonderful concert with us last fall, these good friends return with a new program ranging from W. A. Mozart and Frédéric Chopin to Claude Debussy, George Gershwin, and more. *Adults \$20, students/artists \$15, children \$5; tickets and more at www.eventbrite.com (search "Roseminna" in Lebanon, NH).*

Cantabile Women's Chorus: Gloria!—Sunday, June 5, at 4:00 pm

We are delighted to welcome back Cantabile for a concert originally planned for January but canceled due to COVID. The program includes music of Antonio Vivaldi, Johannes Brahms, and a new commission from Philip Silvey to commemorate Cantabile's 20th anniversary last year. *Adults \$15, students \$10, under 13 free, advance ticket purchase preferred; more at cantabilewomen.org/.*

Counterpoint: The Woods and the Waters—Friday, July 15, at 7:30 pm

Director Nathaniel Lew brings Vermont's professional choral ensemble back to Lebanon for the first time in four years with a program celebrating landscapes near and far, with guest pianist Alison Cerutti. Music by Jude Navari, Joan Szymko, Benjamin Britten, and NH's own Amy Beach, along with the premiere of a piece by composer Travis Ramsey and poet Jim Schley—who both live in the Upper Valley. *Adults \$20, seniors \$15, students and limited means \$5; more at counterpointchorus.org/upcoming/.*

Register Now! Classicopia Summer Music Camp—Two Sessions: August 8-13 and 15-20

An immersive summer program for instrumental and vocal instruction—right here in Lebanon! Students 8-18 work with outstanding faculty and guests, 9a-3p daily. *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
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First Congregational Church of Lebanon

10 South Park Street
PO Box 230
Lebanon, NH 03766

DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Coming in June! Children's Sunday (June 12) / Bike & Build (June 14-16)



Music
at the
Meetinghouse

Upcoming Concerts at FCC

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

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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

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