



# Grace Notes

The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

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## The Pastoral Perspective

Later this month, on May 28 to be specific, we will observe Pentecost, the “birthday” of the Church. This birthday is much like Washington’s or Lincoln’s—observed, not actual. Still, it is an event worth commemorating.

Just imagine what it was like to be back in Jerusalem some 2,000 years ago, with people from every nation gathered. Would we be excited by the multiplicity of languages present? Or would we be put off by the differences of dress and culture? We know what we should say, but would that be what we really believe?

The truth is welcoming newcomers can be hard. Welcoming new ideas can be difficult. After all, who really likes change?

Change is disruptive. Change is inconvenient. Change is inevitable.

That’s been evident throughout the millennia-long history of the Church. What began as a local meeting of some followers of Jesus ultimately grew into the world’s largest faith. Today, there are multiple expressions of Christianity, some quite distinctive, but common to most of them are some core beliefs. While these are interpreted in wildly different ways—e.g., the question of whether Jesus was human or divine; the meaning of Jesus’ being “the Son of God”; the importance, and even number, of sacraments—the Church should provide space for all.

“Space for all.” That’s a nice phrase, but what does it even mean? Well, let’s look at the application of *all*. In the Church, we may not like one another, but we are part of one big family. And I’m sorry about the cliché, but “family” is fundamental to Scripture: we are children of God and, thus, a *family*.

From Genesis and the creation of humanity through Acts and the birth of the Church, we are portrayed as a divinely inspired fellowship. The Book of Acts memorably depicts a reversal of the calamity of Babel, in which humanity was sundered. On that day of Pentecost, a new family was born through the Holy Spirit, as people from every nation set aside linguistic and cultural differences to focus on the one thing that brought them together: Jesus.

A cynic might say that while this vision of unity may be nice, it soon fell apart. Christians have been past masters of being at one another’s throats;

Continued on Page 5

# SUNDAY SERVICE

## All Are Welcome to Worship at FCC

*Sundays at 10:00 AM (In-Person/Zoom)*

*For in-person worshipers, masks and vaccination are strongly encouraged but not required.*

### Coffee Hour Served May 7 and 21

We've resumed this popular fellowship opportunity on occasional Sundays; sign up in the Parish Hall. **New volunteers always welcome—on ANY Sunday!**

### 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.*

## Guest Preacher—Sunday, May 7 The Rev. Gordon M. Rankin Conference Minister, NH Conference (UCC)

Plan to join us the first Sunday in May to welcome the Rev. Gordon Rankin, NH Conference Minister. In addition to leading worship, preaching, and sharing communion with us, Rev. Rankin will join us briefly at coffee hour to talk about the work of the NH Conference and his own life in ministry.



Upper Valley  
**Habitat**  
for Humanity®

### Moment for Mission Sunday, May 21

Join us to welcome UV Habitat Executive Director Eva Loomis, who will tell us about the organization's affordable-housing mission and current projects.

## MAY 28 IS PENTECOST SUNDAY

*Worship at 10:00 am—Wear Red!*

## Mother's Day is Blanket Sunday

We're pleased to participate again in the CWS BLANKETS program, a special mission project by which Church World Service offers blankets and other relief supplies to people in crisis around the world (for more details, visit [cwsblankets.org](http://cwsblankets.org)). Please consider a contribution in honor or memory of the mother(s) in your life. A minimum of \$10 is suggested, but any amount is welcome. *Dedications will appear in the bulletin MOTHER'S DAY, MAY 14.*

*Please submit your dedication information to the church office by Thursday, May 11. Contributions may be sent in after that date.*



### Spend Some Time in the Corner!

The **Children's Community Corner**, that is! We'd love for more adults in our congregation to engage with FCC's fantastic kids, whether on Sundays or some other time. **The purpose of such interaction is mentorship and guidance, not just supervision.** Please consider offering your time and experience.

**MANY THANKS!**

## Children's Sunday is June 11

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

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

*If you're interested in participating, please contact Nan Parsons ([nlp3721@yahoo.com](mailto:nlp3721@yahoo.com) / 603-863-8354).*

# MAY 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>30</b> 10a Worship/CCC 2p <b>Classicopia: Vibrant Violin</b>	<b>1</b> 4-8p UVMC Suzuki Program	<b>2</b> 4:30p FCC Choir	<b>3</b> 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	<b>4</b> 4:45p UVMC Children's Choir 7p NA Group	<b>5</b> 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	<b>6</b> 1:30p <b>Jennifer Turbes, Viola</b> 7:30p <b>Bel Canto CS: Journeys</b>
<b>7</b> 10a Worship/CCC (Communion; <b>Rev. Gordon Rankin</b> guest preacher) 4p <b>Bel Canto CS: Journeys</b>	<b>8</b> 4-8p UVMC Suzuki Program 7p Diaconate	<b>9</b> 4:30p FCC Choir 7p Church Council	<b>10</b> 8a-4p NH-WIC 7p Bel Canto Annual Meeting	<b>11</b> 4:45p UVMC Children's Choir 7p NA Group	<b>12</b> 7:30p <b>Anon Coffeehouse (Season Finale)</b>	<b>13</b> 1p <b>Spring Clean-Up!</b> 4p Borowsky Student Recital
<b>14</b> <i>Mother's Day</i> 10a Worship/CCC ( <b>Blanket Sunday</b> )	<b>15</b> 4-8p UVMC Suzuki Program	<b>16</b> 4:30p FCC Choir	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> 4:45p UVMC Children's Choir 7p NA Group	<b>19</b> 7p <b>UV-AA Open Mic Night</b>	<b>20</b> 9a-6p <b>UVMC Sing &amp; Play Fest</b>
<b>21</b> 10a Worship/CCC ( <b>UV Habitat</b> visit)	<b>22</b> 7p MSA Comm (No UVMC Suzuki Program)	<b>23</b> 3:30p Leb Rec Auditions 4:30p FCC Choir	<b>24</b> 3:30p Leb Rec Auditions	<b>25</b> 11a-6p NH-WIC 4:45p UVMC Children's Choir ( <i>last</i> ) 7p NA Group	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b> <b>PENTECOST</b> 10a Worship/CCC 2p <b>Classicopia: Musical Mothers</b>	<b>29</b> <i>Memorial Day</i> (No UVMC Suzuki Program)	<b>30</b> 4:30p FCC Choir 7p Cantabile Rehearsal	<b>31</b>	<b>1</b> 7p NA Group	<b>2</b> 6-9p Leb Rec Quilters Retreat	<b>3</b> 9a-5p Leb Rec Quilters Retreat 7:30p <b>Folk, Roots, and Cello</b>
<b>4</b> 10a Worship/CCC (Communion) 4p <b>Cantabile: We Sing Her Song</b>	<b>5</b> 4-8p UVMC Suzuki Program ( <i>last</i> )	<b>6</b> 4:30p FCC Choir	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> 7p NA Group	<b>9</b> 7p <b>Cameo: French Baroque</b>	<b>10</b>

*If you have questions or corrections regarding any event, please notify us at [church@fccleb.org](mailto:church@fccleb.org) or 603-448-4281.*

## CHURCH COUNCIL

Jon Scott opened Council's April meeting by reviewing a prioritized list of tasks, which he hoped to start assigning to Council members in order to report to the congregation on goals for the calendar year. He suggested fleshing out these tasks and goals for the May meeting.

Referring to his **pastor's report**, Rev. Steve Silver referred to a discussion he'd had with the Diaconate about our church's weak participation in ecumenical services, stressing that such participation is important. He is now looking forward to the spring worship season, primarily the always-popular Children's Sunday service in June, in which the children all shine. He'll soon be planning that with Nan Parsons. Steve also noted the tasks on Jon's list, primarily the bylaws review and revived campaign. Lastly, he appreciated having seen so many in person at the Easter service.

Linda Gerlach offered a brief report for the **Diaconate**, explaining that Dawn Troutman has been driving new member recruitment strategies. Linda also reported that the group will offer a plan for a new directory of church members at June's Council meeting. It will be produced in-house and available in both electronic and printable form. It should allow for easy, ongoing updates of information and photos from members. Church Administrator Brian Clancy agreed that the directory would be useful and not difficult to create, the most challenging aspect being collection of photos. He and the Deacons will discuss the project further.

Valerie Nevel explained that **Mission and Social Action** had not met in

March but plans to meet later in April. Rev. Silver is following up with mission partners to invite them to address the congregation at worship.

Jon Scott clarified that **Rev. Gordon Rankin** would not be available for extended in-person discussion after worship when he visits on May 7 as guest preacher. Steve explained that he and Gordon would have to leave after the service for the Grafton-Orange-Sullivan Association spring meeting in Hanover. Jon will try to find another opportunity to meet with Gordon to provide feedback on last year's consultation process and set up ways that the NH Conference can support efforts to restructure our governance and engage our Pastor-Parish Relations Committee.

Proceeding with his review of tasks, Jon noted that the **Personnel Committee**, having budgeted a line for staff compensation increases, needs to meet with staff and determine those increases. Following that, the committee then will work on job descriptions, evaluations, and goal setting. The committee will first meet with Steve, then decide next steps. Staff compensation is important and needs to be addressed soon.

Jon next addressed our **governance restructuring**, the key aspect of our ongoing bylaws revision. He has contacted Amy Driscoll, who was closely involved in earlier discussions, about resuming those. He would like to get a clear idea of functional and structural changes we'd like to see, to inform the bylaws revision. Asked whether committee input on this would be desirable, Jon agreed. Committees should definitely participate, and we shouldn't assume that

## Spring Clean-Up!

Saturday, May 13, at 1:00 pm

Please join in our seasonal effort to tidy up the church yard. We'll rake, trim hedges, and generally pick up around the grounds.



**Bring gloves, rakes, gardening tools, and anything else that might be useful (such as a truck!). Thanks for helping with this important work!**

## Committee Meetings

The following regular meetings will happen remotely via Zoom:

<b>Diaconate</b>	5/8 and 6/12, 7:00
<b>Council</b>	5/9 and 6/13, 7:00
<b>MSA</b>	5/22 and 6/26, 7:00

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

any committee's responsibilities or role would remain unchanged.

Turning to plans for a **prospective capital campaign**, Jon asked Rev. Silver to weigh in on a prospective timeline and priorities. Steve asked us to revisit the priorities identified in a congregational visioning session in 2019, to determine which of those still speak to us now and seem truly important. As examples, he named

## NEWS AND NOTES

kitchen renovations, sound system upgrades, and potentially video monitors in the Sanctuary, which would facilitate communication in worship and remote guest preachers. (Asked for clarification of the video idea, Jon and Steve explained that there are a number of uses for such technology in worship, but the idea needs further development.) He hopes that we can reformulate these priorities sometime in the next few weeks, before launching a campaign in the fall or new calendar year.

Jon then reported on confusion and delays in the IRS **certification of our non-profit status**, required for

online giving. It's not clear what's happened with our filing process, but Jon will consult Richard Paul CPA and try to restart the process quickly. He hopes to enable online giving by the fall.

Jon again asked for committees to articulate their priorities for the year, so that we can communicate those to the congregation and hold ourselves accountable. That, in turn, will assist our governance restructuring.

Lastly, Jon referred to our **ongoing covenanting process**, intended to determine how we can better work with each other and avoid any toxic communication. He observed that

we don't seem to be operating very differently than we were a year ago. Jon wants us to be well positioned for any future issues. He will be in touch with both Rev. Rankin and Council members.

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### DIACONATE

Chris Chase opened the Deacons' April meeting with a reflection on declining church attendance among the general population. He expressed hope that smaller numbers would still find unity, praying for pursuit of commonality attuned to God's will. The Deacons also considered current

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

engaging in disputes, arguments, and violent disagreements; succumbing to schism. The bottom line is that we like to fight with each other. Why? That's a question with multiple answers, but I think the truth in part is that we like to think we know it all, that ultimately, we are as smart as God.

Now, Christians are not the only ones to engage in communal disputes. These happen in most every community of faith. Period.

So, humans like to pretend they know as much as God, to assert that they can speak for the Almighty, because they—no, *we*—know exactly what God thinks about most any topic. And while I believe we can make some assumptions about where God, where Jesus, would come out on an issue, at the end of the day, such propositions remain nothing more than educated guesses, one of which is that God is okay with the concept of change. Let's look at the Bible for evidence.

Scripture begins with Creation *ex nihilo*. God made our universe from nothing. Talk about change! God liberated the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. God spoke through prophets about the bad things being done in Israel. God came to humanity in the person of Jesus to save us from our sin.

Change, change, change.

Fast-forward to the present. Bluntly put, the Church is in the midst of an upheaval. Rather than providing a safe harbor, it is now roiled by the same disruptions affecting all of society. Technology, social mores, you name it—we're experiencing it.

So, what to do? Well, I believe we might start by looking at the Book of Acts and the formation of the first Church, to see how the faithful might live together in a time when we're pulled apart. This is the day for us to look at all of our options, to ask how we should best use our resources, to focus on how to best follow the way of Jesus. That includes considering how we welcome people, both strangers and folks long familiar to us, into our family of faith.

Yours faithfully, *Steve*

## OUR MISSION NEAR AND FAR

### The Children's Community Corner Thanks You!

This year's LENTEN LUNCH BAG OFFERING brought in \$900! We'll divide that total between assistance for families who find refuge at WISE's safe house and our annual support for student scholarships in San Jose Villanueva, El Salvador, through Epilogos Charities. *Many thanks to our generous congregation!*



### THANKS FOR SHARING!

We're grateful to report that our congregation gave \$1,141 this spring to the UCC's One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) special mission offering. With this donation we support worldwide initiatives in healthcare, education, agriculture, and refugee and emergency relief. A national, interdenominational campaign, OGHS is the most vital UCC mission effort of the year, and we're proud to support it!

end violence  
**wise**  
share hope • change lives

### Volunteer and Donate!

Serving the Upper Valley from its facility in Lebanon, WISE provides crisis services, community education, and advocacy for those affected by domestic abuse, sexual violence, and stalking. It relies on both trained staff and dedicated, empathetic volunteer advocates.

To learn more about volunteering for WISE, please visit [wiseuv.org/join-us/#training](http://wiseuv.org/join-us/#training), email [volunteers@wiseuv.org](mailto:volunteers@wiseuv.org), or call 603-448-5922.

congregational care needs. It was suggested that a list of past recipients of prayer shawls be created, and Sue Pratt offered to make an appeal in worship for knitters interested in learning how to make them.

Deb Scott and Stacey Steele have considered options for creating a new church directory, perhaps using an online platform or software. Rev. Steve Silver noted that we already have member contact information, so the focus of this effort should be the collection of photos. Securing information would be a concern with any online format. Deacons will consult with other churches and offer some possibilities to Council in two months.

The Deacons further discussed some preliminary options for membership recruitment. Events on our front lawn create positive public visibility, and in addition to Sunday worship,

summer Thursday evenings might offer opportunities with the nearby Farmers' Market in Colburn Park. There continues to be a need for a new visitor brochure. Musical events certainly attract new people to our building, but congregation members need to be encouraged to convey our image beyond our walls. Keys to recruitment remain inviting friends to attend worship and providing a welcoming space for visitors.

Rev. Silver expressed satisfaction with Easter services, but he noted that our attendance at both Ash Wednesday and Easter sunrise services was minimal. FCC's commitment to ecumenical services needs to be reassessed as events are proposed in future. It was suggested that ecumenical service projects, rather than worship, might be more successful. Mission & Social Action should be consulted.



**APRIL WORSHIP AND MUSIC.** Acacia Chamber Music shared a bright spring promenade; worship brought its own joy in music and children's moments.

# MUSIC AT THE MEETINGHOUSE



**Music  
at the  
Meetinghouse**

## **Spring Concerts!**

*All in the Sanctuary. Masks and vaccination recommended.*

### **Take Pause, Take Courage: A Viola Recital with Jennifer Turbes—Saturday, May 6, at 1:30 pm**

UVMC's Jennifer Turbes and pianist Will Ögmundson share a thoughtful program of Reena Esmail, Jessie Montgomery, Harry T. Burleigh, and more. *Adults \$20 suggested; more at [uvmusic.org/events](http://uvmusic.org/events).*

### **Bel Canto Chamber Singers: Journeys—Saturday, May 6, at 7:30 pm / Sunday, May 7, at 4:00 pm**

Jane Woods directs Bel Canto in a survey of both literal and figurative journeys. The program features a variety of genres in music for choir, piano, and the handbells of the Church of Christ at Dartmouth. *Adults \$15, students \$10, under 13 free; for tickets and more, visit [www.belcantosingers.org/spring-2023-concert.html](http://www.belcantosingers.org/spring-2023-concert.html).*

### **The Anonymous Coffeehouse (Season Finale!)—Friday, May 12, at 7:30 pm**

Enjoy our popular community venue for live folk music before it goes on summer break! Come and go as you please; baked goods and non-alcoholic drinks available. *Free; donations welcome. For more, visit [anoncoffee.org/](http://anoncoffee.org/).*

### **UVMC Sing & Play Festival 2023—Saturday, May 20 (various times and locations)**

A celebration of music making by each other, for each other! Various studio recitals and class performances will happen at FCC and elsewhere in downtown Lebanon. *Free to all; full details at [uvmusic.org/events](http://uvmusic.org/events).*

### **Classicopia: Musical Mothers—Sunday, May 28, at 2:00 pm**

Pianist Dan Weiser joins Borowsky siblings Emmanuel (violin) and Frances (cello) to celebrate women composers, from Americans Amy Beach and Undine Smith Moore to Dutch composer Heleen Verleur and early-20th-century Croatian Dora Pejačević. *Adults \$20, FCC members \$15, children free; more at [classicopia.org](http://classicopia.org).*

### **Liz Simmons and Casey Murray: Folk, Roots, and Cello—Saturday, June 3, at 7:30 pm**

Celebrating the release of her solo recording *Poets*, Brattleboro singer-songwriter and guitarist Liz Simmons (of the band Low Lily) offers a program with versatile, classically-trained cellist Casey Murray (of Corner House). They'll play both traditional repertoire and original songs, reflecting on the sea, adventure, love, loss, and more. *Suggested donation \$10-20; for more, visit [lizsimmons.net](http://lizsimmons.net).*

### **Cantabile Women's Chorus: We Sing Her Song—Sunday, June 4, at 4:00 pm**

This superb ensemble honors the lives and experiences of historical, biblical, and ordinary women in music of Johannes Brahms, Gwyneth Walker, Randall Thompson, Alice Parker, Rosephanye Powell, and more.

*Adults \$15, seniors \$10, students \$5, under 13 free; more at [www.cantabilewomen.org](http://www.cantabilewomen.org).*

### **Cameo Baroque: Music of the French Baroque—Friday, June 9, at 7:00 pm**

Ernie Drown and friends share a delightful taste of François Couperin, Jacques-Christophe Naudot, and other French composers. *Free-will donation, beneficiary TBD; more at [www.cameoarts.org](http://www.cameoarts.org).*

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

A rousing success last summer, this immersive program offers instrumental and vocal instruction to students aged 8-18, with outstanding faculty and guest artists. *Details and registration at [classicopia.org/summer-camp/](http://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](mailto:church@fccleb.org) • [www.fccleb.org](http://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

*Blanket Sunday*

MOTHER'S DAY, MAY 9

**PENTECOST**

Sunday, May 28

**Children's Sunday**

Celebrate on June 11!



Music  
at the  
Meetinghouse

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*All in the Sanctuary. Masks and vaccination recommended.*

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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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