



Grace Notes

The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

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Old Highway 387

The Pastoral Perspective

Where did the fall go? All of a sudden, it's cold.

Like millions of New Englanders, I will complain about the cold, the frost, the snow and the ice when they come. I will long for the return of warmer weather. And when spring and summer return, I will long for these cool days. Yep. As the old saying goes, the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence. It can be a source of comfort to look to the future, to imagine all will be well tomorrow.

But when we do that, we can lose sight of this day. This day that God has made. As I write these words, the sun is shining brightly. This day is a gift. Which is not an inappropriate thought in this month of Thanksgiving and Stewardship.

We have much for which to be thankful. I encourage you to count your blessings, to focus on what is good, and how God has blessed you. Now, I know that not everyone's finances are robust, and some of us have health issues, and maybe our living situations are tenuous. But we're alive, now, in this place, at this time, and I heartily believe this fact is worth giving thanks to God.

Remember that fall is not yet over. That Thanksgiving has not yet arrived. That, if you're a Patriots fan, there is always next year. Things may not be perfect, but looking around the world, and considering the broad sweep of human history, we have it good.

And if things get tough, if you find times are trying, pray. God always wants to hear from you, even if it is to carp. And you can always turn to your church family. People in our congregation want to help, to listen, to be there for you.

We all have challenges to overcome, obstacles to surmount in life. Jesus showed us that we need not do so alone, that God will be with us, even in the darkest of moments. Which is another reason to look at this day and say, "It is good. It is a blessing from God."

Yours faithfully,

Steve

SUNDAY SERVICE

All Are Welcome to Worship at FCC

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

Coffee Hour (Usually) Served!

We've resumed this popular fellowship opportunity as often as possible; sign up in the kitchen. **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.

Fill the Cart! LISTEN Visits on November 5

This month in worship we welcome a representative from LISTEN Community Services to tell us about the organization's current needs and programs.

Please consider a donation of non-perishable food or personal-care items for our shopping cart!



Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service

Tuesday, November 21
FCC Sanctuary, 7:00 pm
(tentative)

We hope to have our annual Thanksgiving service this month, although we are still working out details with our ecumenical partners. All are welcome to share in this inclusive opportunity to give thanks to God for all we have received this past year.

Let us give thanks as a community!

STEWARDSHIP 2024

Don't Bury Your Treasure

For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance. —Matthew 25:29

The **parable of the talents**, as you may recall, tells of three workers entrusted with their employer's wealth in his absence. Two of them invest the man's wealth, earning a high return. The third, worried about punishment from his boss should he incur a loss, buries the money instead, returning it upon the master's return. The boss is very angry to learn of the worker's choice and punishes him.

What do we learn from this story? Well, we've been given much by God, and how we use it matters. Not just our money, but our time and our skills, should be used wisely and to advance the Kingdom of God. So, don't bury that treasure—use it for God!

STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY IS NOVEMBER 19.

Please consider your commitment, prayerfully and honestly, to FCC's mission and ministry in 2024, as we dedicate our pledges together.

New Members to Be Received November 12

Have you found a welcoming, spiritually nourishing church home here? Would you like to get involved in our programs and ministries? If so, we invite you to join our faith community as a covenant member.

If you'd like to learn more about this invitation or have questions, please speak with the Rev. Steve Silver or contact the church office.

Christmas Decorating!

Following Worship on Sunday, December 3

Yes, CHRISTMAS!! Advent begins the first Sunday in December, so plan to stay after worship to hang wreaths, string lights, trim our tree, and have fun getting the church ready for this festive season.

Join in welcoming the spirit of the season!

NOVEMBER 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29 10a Worship/CCC 2p Classicopia: Mendelssohns and Schumanns	30 4-9p UVMC Suzuki Program	31 <i>Halloween</i> 1p Cameo Baroque 4:30p FCC Choir	1 <i>All Saints Day</i> 3-6:30p UVMC 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	2 3-6:30p UVMC/Children's Choir 7p NA Group	3 5-6p UVMC Suzuki Program 6-9p Leb Rec Quilters Retreat	4 9a-5p Leb Rec Quilters Retreat
5 10a Worship/CCC (Communion)	6 4-9p UVMC Suzuki Program	7 <i>Election Day</i> 1p Cameo Baroque 4:30p FCC Choir	8 8a-3:30p WIC 3-6:30p UVMC 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	9 3-6:30p UVMC/Children's Choir 7p NA Group	10 5-6p UVMC Suzuki Program 7:30p Anon Coffeehouse	11 <i>Veterans Day (observed 11/10)</i> 2p E Borowsky Student Recital
12 10a Worship/CCC	13 4-9p UVMC Suzuki Program 7p Diaconate	14 1p Cameo Baroque 4:30p FCC Choir 7p Council	15 3-6:30p UVMC 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	16 3-6:30p UVMC/Children's Choir 7p NA Group	17 5-6p UVMC Suzuki Program	18
19 STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY 10a Worship/CCC 2p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	20 8a-3:30p WIC 4-9p UVMC Suzuki Program	21 1p Cameo Baroque 4:30p FCC Choir 7p Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service (tentative)	22 No UVMC No Bel Canto	23 <i>Thanksgiving</i> No UVMC 7p NA Group	24 No UVMC 7:30p Anon Coffeehouse	25
26 10a Worship/CCC 4p Cameo Baroque: 19 Days Benefit	27 4-9p UVMC Suzuki Program 7p MSA Comm	28 1p Cameo Baroque 4:30p FCC Choir	29 3-6:30p UVMC 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	30 3-6:30p UVMC/Children's Choir 7p NA Group	1 5-6p UVMC Suzuki Program 7:30p Anon Coffeehouse	2 10a-6p UVMC Student Recitals
3 <i>ADVENT 1</i> 10a Worship/CCC (Communion) 11a Christmas Decorating! 2p Classicopia: Four-Hand Holiday	4 9a-4p (all week) LISTEN Holiday Baskets Project 4-9p UVMC Suzuki Program	5 9a-4p LISTEN HB 1p Cameo Baroque 4:30p FCC Choir	6 9a-4p LISTEN HB 3-6:30p UVMC 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	7 9a-4p LISTEN HB 3-6:30p UVMC/Children's Choir 7p NA Group	8 9a-4p LISTEN HB 5-6p UVMC Suzuki Program 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	9 7:30p Bel Canto Winter Concert

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

Rev. Steve Silver opened Council's October meeting with his pastor's report, emphasizing the search for new leadership for the **Children's Community Corner**. He's spoken with parents, clergy colleagues, and other churches about their programs for children's education, noting in particular his consultations with Lyme and Meriden Congregational Churches and an educator from the Mont Vernon (NH) Congregational Church. Steve believes we need to consider hiring someone for this position, having been fortunate to have years of enthusiastic, capable leadership from volunteers Marcia Corkins and Nan Parsons. He wanted to propose this potential new position to Council before involving the Personnel and Finance Committees and, perhaps, the congregation at Annual Meeting. Walter Scott, speaking as both a former Sunday-School student and a current parent, noted the change in our congregation's size and the current challenge of having to work with a wider age range. Valerie Nevel stressed the value of ascertaining how other churches are handling this need, and she also suggested contacting local school districts, which may offer tutors or retired teachers well suited to this part-time role. (Ashley Oronte will also continue in her assistant role.)

Steve also expressed his enthusiasm for **Dominic Watson's baptism** on October 15. That is also Dominic's 10th birthday, and he had asked to celebrate this momentous day with his church family. His family is planning a party for coffee hour,

and Steve encouraged everyone to make sure to attend on what is sure to be a joyful Sunday.

Referring to Dawn Troutman's **Treasurer report**, Jon Scott noted that he and Dawn are preparing for **Stewardship Sunday**, including having congregation members speak in worship about what stewardship means to them. Steve suggested November 19 as the best option, so we'd want volunteers to speak on the 2-3 Sundays leading up to that. Noting that fall contribution statements had just been sent out, Jon will follow those up with a message thanking the congregation for its support and encouraging people to increase their gifts if possible. He added that while we do keep track of pledges, we don't typically pressure anyone to fulfill those if they're unable to do so.

Replying to an inquiry about **online giving**, Jon reported that while no progress had yet been made, he still hopes to make that option available in January 2024. On a related topic,

the church's **website** (created about 10-12 years ago) desperately needs to be redesigned and improved. Church Admin Brian Clancy often updates basic information, content, and links, but ideally someone in our congregation with IT experience would be able to identify a longer-term upgrade of the site itself. A budget line has been included for this purpose for several years, and Linda Gerlach reported that the Diaconate is willing to contribute some from its line. Rather than cost, however, Jon stressed that the real challenge is to agree on what FCC's website should be, what it should include, and how it would function for our congregation. He suggested forming a workgroup for this, and Walter Scott volunteered to join it, recognizing that wider congregational input is necessary and welcome.

For the **Diaconate**, Linda Gerlach reported that a first run of T-shirts had been printed and look good; they will be available for purchase by the congregation. Jon suggested that a link to purchase be placed on

FCC T-Shirts Available!

You can now wear your connection to FCC on your sleeve, or close to it, with a new T-shirt! With a mountain image over the phrase "God is my rock" on the front, and our church name on the back, this teal shirt is available in different styles and sizes. Many thanks to the Diaconate for making this happen—specifically to Deb Scott, who led efforts to design and create these handsome shirts!



To order yours online with a secure credit-card payment (\$18-21), please visit fcclebanon.secure-decoration.com.

NEWS AND NOTES

Committee Meetings

The following regular meetings will happen remotely via Zoom:

Diaconate 11/13 and 12/11, 7:00

Council 11/14 and 12/12, 7:00

MSA 11/27, 7:00

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

the website, with an option to make an additional contribution to the Open Door Ministry, an option of which Steve approved. Linda also mentioned that the Deacons are considering a return to meeting in-person, though not until after the winter. Lastly, she noted that there is interest in reviving our monthly Community Dinners; Jon added that Dawn is particularly eager to drive that effort, with some ideas to make it more sustainable and less taxing on longtime volunteers.

Valerie reported that the **Personnel Committee** will meet October 30. The **Mission and Social Action Committee** has invited someone from LISTEN Community Services to speak in worship on November 5. They'll discuss the organization's needs and service opportunities, and we will take a collection in the shopping cart (Valerie will identify most-needed items). Lastly, Valerie invited anyone interested to attend a November 28 Zoom meeting with representatives of United Church Funds, which manages some of our endowment investments.

For the **Board of Governors**, Walter Scott is developing a project list for the coming year, ideally with cost estimates, and he'll work with Dawn

on budget needs. In addition to the repair of the front steps, he's looking into previously identified tasks, some of which may fall under a campaign effort. He asked how such projects are normally funded, and Valerie explained the capital-fund portion of the long-standing Dole Trust. Walter will try to distinguish capital projects from those that can instead be included in the regular budget.

On a related topic, Walter followed up on a review of our **insurance renewal** package, noting that he's sought advice from a friend in the insurance business. As valuations and costs have risen considerably, we should verify that both church and parsonage are sufficiently insured and secure the best coverage we can. Valerie offered to help with this.

Jon inquired about getting a better sense of how well our investments in **energy efficiency** and insulation have paid off. While it would be difficult to account for variables in Sanctuary usage, the parsonage may allow a more consistent analysis. Brian offered to gather usage data from Dead River Co. and Liberty Utilities. He further explained that our annual fixed-price oil plan has been made possible by an ongoing arrangement by Gordon Sargent, and Steve offered to thank Gordon on behalf of Council.

With respect to the cost of utilities, Valerie wondered if our **rental fees** are sufficient to cover operational costs of using the building. Brian explained that our set fees haven't changed in several years, and he negotiates rates with users anyway, depending on user and purpose.

Increased use and consistent billing, though, have drawn higher revenues from rental fees each year. Noting that Council trusts Brian to use his discretion and flexibility in charging for rentals, Jon advised a review of current rates and practices, so that this responsibility wouldn't fall only on him. Jon, Brian, Valerie, and Dawn will meet to discuss.

Barb Jones added an update on the **Pastor-Parish Relations Committee**. The group had a second meeting to refine its framework and operation; it now feels ready to schedule a meeting with Rev. Silver and invite congregational input. The meeting will ideally happen in November.

DIACONATE

Deb Scott opened October's meeting of the Deacons with consideration of denominational designation as a "Creation Justice Church." These include identifying founding tenets in both the Hebrew Bible and Jesus' teachings, affirming the human need for clean air and water, and recognizing a relationship between environmental stewardship and social justice in the world.

The **new T-shirts** have arrived, and Rev. Steve Silver reiterated approval of the vibrant color and impactful message. First recipients need to reimburse Deb Scott; more may be ordered online. The Deacons also discussed a banner for display in the narthex, serving the purpose of the outdated trifold welcome brochures that once were available in the pews. It was noted that our website may, for many, be the primary portal for

NEWS AND NOTES

information about FCC, and so a QR code might be included on the banner and printed materials.

Jim Hughes, who has joined the choir, would also like to become a **covenant member** of the church. Others may be interested, too.

Dawn Troutman led a discussion of resuming our **community dinners**, perhaps in the spring. Distribution of fruit with gas/food cards has been well received, and she asked Deacons to complete cards of well wishes for recipients. Dawn also suggested recognizing Kevin Charbono for his work maintaining our grounds, which Steve noted is already being done.

While the FY23 Diaconate **budget line** has gone unused to date, Dawn proposed that it stay in the FY24 budget. Possible uses are T-shirts, the retractable banner, coffee hour refreshments, and welcome bags. The Deacons also support funding an update of the church website.

Steve will review those in the current directory who don't have an assigned Deacon. The Deacons considered what other information might be included in the **directory**, which should include Council input, too.

Lastly, the Diaconate is hoping for a return to **in-person meetings** in the spring, as Zoom continues to be preferable during the cold and dark of winter months. It's possible some hybrid arrangement might work.

CHRISTMAS COMES TO ALL The Holiday Basket Program



For years FCC has participated in the **HOLIDAY BASKET PROGRAM** organized by **LISTEN Community Services**. Demand for the program is higher than ever, as families struggle to provide warm clothing for their children and food for holiday meals. **There is always a wait list.**

LISTEN will again be using FCC space to manage the collection and distribution of gifts—a vast operation! While our church will donate that space, individuals in our congregation will also donate gift cards and new items from wish lists that families have supplied to LISTEN.

Gift lists will be emailed and posted in the Parish Hall. Thanks to all for giving to our neighbors in the true spirit of Christmas!

ADVENT IS COMING—PREPARE YE THE WAY!

Sunday, December 3, 11:00 am (Following Worship)—Christmas Decorating Party

Sunday, December 3, 2:00 pm—Classicopia: Four-Hand Holiday

Sat., Dec. 9, 7:30 pm / Sun., Dec. 10, 4:00 pm—Bel Canto Chamber Singers: Wintertide

Sunday, December 10 (date/time tentative)—Christmas Party and Carol Sing at the Parsonage

Sunday, December 17, 3:00 pm—Upper Valley Music Center Messiah Sing

Saturday, December 23, 7:00 pm—A Borowsky Family Christmas

Sunday, December 24—CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

Morning Worship at 10:00, Family Service at 5:00, Lessons and Carols at 8:00. Christ is coming!

Lebanon Downtown Holiday Celebration

Saturday, December 2

(Various locations throughout town, all day)

Lebanon Recreation and local businesses offer an impressive array of festivities around the Green, and the Upper Valley Music Center will present student recitals in FCC's Sanctuary all afternoon. More details at lebanonnh.gov and uvmusic.org.

THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION

OUTING CLUB Highway 38 Hanover



A BIRTHDAY BAPTISM BASH. On October 15 we celebrated the baptism and 10th birthday of Dominic Watson! A lively crowd enjoy a delicious spread at coffee hour, organized by Stacey and Juliet Steele and the rest of Dominic's family and friends.

MUSIC AT THE MEETINGHOUSE



Music
at the
Meetinghouse

Upcoming Concerts

All in the Sanctuary. Masks welcome but optional.

The Anonymous Coffeehouse: Season Four!—Fridays, Nov. 10 and 24, Dec. 1 and 15, all 7:30 pm

Our comfy community venue for live folk music returns for its fourth season! An informal “listening room” for emerging musicians, each show features several acoustic acts. Come and go as you please; baked goods and hot drinks available. *Free admission, donations welcome. For performers and more, visit anoncoffee.org/.*

Cameo Baroque: Benefit Concert for 19 Days—Sunday, November 26, at 4:00 pm

This superb ensemble (Ernie Drown, Beth Hilgartner, Leslie Stroud, and Laurie Rabut) offers their annual benefit for the UV Haven’s **19 Days of the Valley** campaign. They’ll share an autumnal selection of G. F. Handel, G. P. Telemann, William Boyce, and more. *Freewill donation; more at cameoarts.org or uppervalleyhaven.org.*

Classicopia: Four-Hand Holiday—Sunday, December 3, at 2:00 pm

Daniel Weiser and Philip Liston-Kraft renew this festive tradition of favorite classics in fun, four-hand-piano arrangements, from “Jingle Bells” and “White Christmas” to the Blue Danube Waltz and the Nutcracker. *Adults \$20, FCC members \$15, children free; for more, visit classicopia.org/concert/four-hand-holiday4/.*

Bel Canto Chamber Singers: Wintertide—Saturday, Dec. 9, 7:00 pm / Sunday, Dec. 10, 4:00 pm

Director Jane Woods leads Bel Canto in a seasonal program of choral music with strings, flute, and piano. The concert features Marc-Antoine Charpentier’s *Messe de Minuit*, as well as Ola Gjeilo, John Rutter, and traditional spirituals and French carols. *Adults \$15, students \$10, under 13 free; for more, visit www.belcantosingers.org.*

Upper Valley Music Center Messiah Sing—Sunday, December 17, at 3:00 pm

Organized by UVMC and directed by Mark Nelson, this annual performance of G. F. Handel’s beloved oratorio features student soloists and chamber orchestra. All are welcome to join the chorus (scores are available!) or just listen. *Suggested \$20 donation; more details at uvmusic.org/event/messiah-sing-2.*

A Borowsky Family Christmas—Saturday, December 23, at 7:00 pm

Just added! Pianist Elizabeth Borowsky, in collaboration with her musically accomplished mother, siblings, and friends, presents this special evening of musical mirth. *Program details TBD; subject to change.*



CAMEO’S TELEMANN. Cameo Baroque explored the music of J. S. Bach’s most prolific contemporary and good friend.

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

Stewardship 2024
Don't Bury Your Treasure
Stewardship Sunday is November 19

CHRISTMAS COMES TO ALL
The LISTEN Holiday Basket Program
Support local families and seniors!



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 • Brian Clancy, Church Administrator

Jon Scott, Chair of Church Council • Linda Gerlach, Chair of Deacons • Barbara Jones, Moderator

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