



Grace Notes

The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

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The Pastoral Perspective

This morning's story from the annals of infrastructure is, "Old things break." Yes, patches can be affixed, replacement deferred, but the old things will age, and most likely, they will break.

That's what happened to a couple of water mains in downtown Lebanon today. We don't know the cause, but we can speculate, which I will not do in print. Instead, I would like to focus on things breaking as a result of their age.

We are all familiar with this phenomenon, through our own experience with aging or that which happens to our homes.

But bones and pipes aren't the only things that wear out. So too do institutions. Sometimes they can be renewed. Sometimes they ought to be retired. Sometimes the right choice is difficult. Sometimes we think things are old and should be tossed aside. Sometimes we are wrong.

The institutional church is now about 2,000 years old. It's gone through changes both large and small and will do so again. We may feel that our form of worship is timeless, but that doesn't guarantee that it will endure. But the message of Jesus? That is timeless.

The message is that God loves you and me, and all the world endures because it is true. That doesn't mean that hard times will not come our way—oh, no. But it does mean that we will endure and that the faithful will hang in. Somehow, some way, the message that Jesus sought to spread and to share will reach ears willing to hear.

My hope, my prayer, is that we will be amongst those who welcome the message and the presence of the living Christ. My prayer is that we will distinguish between God and those human institutions built to serve him, which all too often get in the way of the faithful and the willing, those who wish to walk the path of Jesus. My prayer is that rather than be obstructions to the Way of Our Lord, we will instead be aids, leading others and being led to the one thing that endures forever: the love of God, made known in Jesus.

Yours faithfully,

Steve

SUNDAY SERVICE

The 2024 Lebanon CROP Walk—Sunday, October 13, at 12:30

Begun in 1969 in Bismarck, ND, the CROP Hunger Walk is now run nationally by Church World Service. CROP Walks across the country raise about \$9 million a year to fight food insecurity and poverty worldwide.

FCC will offer light food and refreshments to all participants on the front lawn, renewing our long tradition of post-walk fellowship and hospitality.

Questions? Contact the church office or visit crophungerwalk.org/cropwalks/event/hanovernh.

YOU can help in any or all of these ways...

Walk!—On your own or with a group.

Serve!—Contribute food or help with post-walk fellowship (*details TBD*).

Donate!—Sponsor a walker or give directly online using the link below.



www.cropwalk.org

Community Dinner

Sunday, October 27, at 5:00 pm

Leaders: CHURCH COUNCIL

Many thanks to the members of Church Council for leading this month's dinner! Signups for food donations will be available soon in the Parish Hall. Anyone can lend a hand with setup, serving, and cleanup—friends, coworkers, neighbors, ANYONE!

If you're interested in organizing a future dinner, menu resources are available, and the church can reimburse costs. Please contact the church office.

*Please help us provide this important meal!
All are warmly invited to come, eat, and share fellowship, regardless of need or affiliation.*

All Are Welcome to Worship at FCC

Sundays at 10:00 AM (Sanctuary/Zoom)

Coffee Hour Served Weekly!

New volunteers welcome to provide food and serve.

Zoom Greeters and Liturgists Needed!

All invited to serve in these essential worship roles.

If you're interested in these opportunities to serve, please contact the church office.

Do Your Part to Fill the Cart!

We're currently collecting non-perishable food and personal-care items on behalf of:

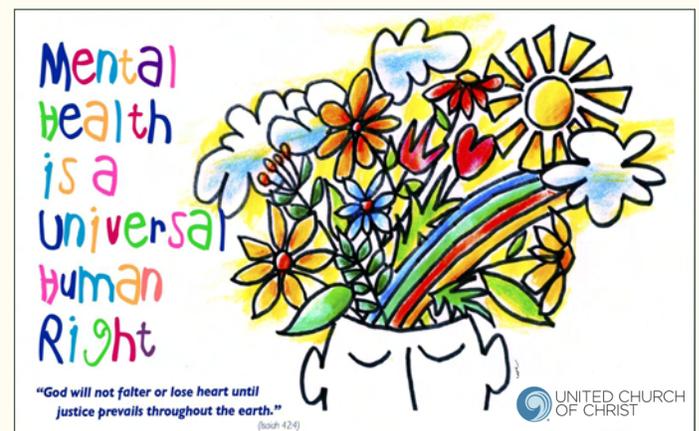
THE UPPER VALLEY HAVEN

For a list of current and ongoing needs, please visit uppervalleyhaven.org/current-wish-lists/.

Neighbors in Need Special UCC Offering—Mental-Health Justice for All!

Neighbors in Need supports ministries of justice and compassion across the US. Two-thirds of the collection funds the UCC's **Justice and Witness Ministries** for local and national initiatives, advocacy efforts, and the fight against systemic injustice. The rest goes to the **Council for American Indian Ministry**, the voice for Native Americans in the UCC, sustaining a proud denominational tradition of assisting Native groups. This year, NIN focuses on mental-health justice, treating mental health as a God-given right and dismantling the shame and stigma around it.

Please contribute as you are able, either payable to FCC (memo "NIN") or online at ucc.org/nin.



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

OCTOBER 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29 10a Worship/CCC 12:30p FCC Outing Club: Farnum Hill	30 4-9p UVMC Suzuki Program	1 No Cameo Baroque No FCC Choir	2 2-6:30p UVMC 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	3 3-5:15p UVMC Children's Choir 7p NA Group	4	5 10a UVMC Music Together
6 10a Worship/CCC (Communion) 4:30p Tunes for Troubled Times	7 4-9p UVMC Suzuki Program	8 12p Cameo Baroque 3:30p FCC Choir 7p Council	9 8a-3:30p WIC 2-6:30p UVMC 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	10 3-5:15p UVMC Children's Choir 7p NA Group	11 7:30p Anon Coffeehouse	12 10a-12p UVMC Comm Chorus 7:30p Classicopia: Four-Hand Frolic
13 10a Worship/CCC 12:30p Lebanon CROP Walk	14 <i>Indigenous Peoples' Day</i> No Suzuki 7p UV Commty Band Mtg 7p Diaconate	15 12p Cameo Baroque 3:30p FCC Choir	16 2-6:30p UVMC 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	17 3-5:15p UVMC Children's Choir 7p NA Group	18	19
20 10a Worship/CCC	21 4-9p UVMC Suzuki Program	22 12p Cameo Baroque 3:30p FCC Choir	23 2-6:30p UVMC 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	24 11a-6p WIC 3-5:15p UVMC Children's Choir 7p NA Group	25 7:30p Anon Coffeehouse	26 10a UVMC Music Together
27 10a Worship/CCC 2p Cameo Baroque Benefit for Open Door 5p Community Dinner	28 4-9p UVMC Suzuki Program	29 12p Cameo Baroque 3:30p FCC Choir	30 2-6:30p UVMC 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	31 <i>Halloween</i> 3-5:15p UVMC Children's Choir 7p NA Group	1 6-9p Leb Rec Quilters Retreat	2 9a-5p Leb Rec Quilters Retreat
3 10a Worship/CCC (Communion)	4 4-9p UVMC Suzuki Program	5 12p Cameo Baroque 3:30p FCC Choir	6 2-6:30p UVMC 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	7 3-5:15p UVMC Children's Choir 7p NA Group	8 7:30p Anon Coffeehouse	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

Jon Scott began Council's September meeting with a devotion written by Rev. Frank Grether, his grandmother's uncle, drawn from Luke 6:38 and entitled "The Open Hand." Jon then celebrated the resumption of Community Dinners and a healthy attendance at Kick-off Sunday, with some first-time visitors. Rev. Steve Silver echoed his appreciation of the fun, positive atmosphere, thanking everyone for being so welcoming.

In his **pastor's report**, Steve explained that he was at clergy convocation in Swansea NH, where he and colleagues were exploring the meaning and freshness of their ordination vows. He also reported on his work with the Housing First Committee, which is currently planning its annual vigil remembering unhoused individuals who have died in the past year. There are serious homelessness issues facing Lebanon, and the committee and our church will continue to work to resolve them. Steve then thanked Dawn Troutman, Valerie Nevel, and Brian Clancy for their work managing and reporting the church's finances; he also thanked the congregation for its generosity and appreciated our ongoing income from endowment.

For the **Diaconate** Linda Gerlach noted discussion of the Community Dinner, pastoral-care concerns, and coverage of coffee-hour duties. Dawn added that proactive appeals tend to draw new volunteers. Linda Jacobs noted we often have more food than we need. Corrine Erskine pointed out that those who most often offer food do so because they genuinely enjoy it, while several agreed that it

should be acceptable if there are no volunteers for a particular Sunday.

Walter Scott reported for the **Board of Governors** that he'd connected with fellow committee member Ben Van Vliet. The Parsonage garage door needs to be replaced, and the new door would have the added benefit of insulation. Valerie suggested a contractor in Enfield who specializes in garage doors at competitive prices. Walter also reported that he'd had a contractor look at the front steps of the church to offer product options and an estimate. The contractor may address the steps project this fall, with the side access ramp following in the spring. Jon recognized the priorities of aesthetics, safety, and durability in these projects. Dawn asked if the same contractor might look at the balcony ceiling damage under the bell tower; Walter plans to contact High Meadow Builders for that repair.

Reporting as **Treasurer**, Dawn noted 2024 income of \$165,431, against expenses of \$172,558; stewardship accounts for almost \$68,916 of the income total. Valerie again raised the question of how the large 2023 year-end stock gift is counted in this year's total; Brian later clarified that roughly 40% of that gift was applied to 2023, with the remainder disbursed this year and counted in the 2024 stewardship total. All agreed that clarity of our current-year financial status was essential as we approach budget planning for 2025.

For **Mission and Social Action**, Valerie noted that this year's CROP Walk would happen October 13, with FCC offering a modest table of

refreshments after the walk. While supporting the revival of Community Dinners, the committee decided it was itself unable to take on planning one. The group also discussed the current shopping-cart collection for the UV Haven.

Valerie continued with a report on the **Trustees'** efforts to arrange a fall meeting with representatives from United Church Funds. She recommended the **Personnel** Committee meet soon to consider 2025 staff compensation, in conjunction with budget planning.

Jon next asked Council members to come to next month's meeting with specific ideas for what we could plan to accomplish in the remainder of the year. He noted that minutes of previous months' meetings contain lists of priorities and tasks, suggesting that members consult and review those minutes. Jon reiterated that our work as Council is a collective enterprise, not the responsibility of just the chair or one or two others. He again celebrated that we are in fact getting some things done, even though it's often easier to focus on what we're not accomplishing.

Corrine observed, having recently read through our **bylaws**, that it did

Committee Meetings

The following regular meetings will happen remotely via Zoom:

Diaconate	10/14 and 11/11, 7:00
Council	10/8 and 11/12, 7:00
MSA	10/28 and TBD, 7:00

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

NEWS AND NOTES

not seem like much needs to change aside from numbers of committee members. She wondered if there was some other reason for the long delay in updating the bylaws. Jon replied that beyond reduced numbers, there are questions of which committees and leadership positions are still essential. Another obstacle, he said, is a current requirement to fill some positions with covenant members. Moreover, some tasks once covered by volunteers are now done by staff. Corrine asked again who serves on the bylaws committee and whether it has met; Jon reviewed the members and reported that the group did not meet this summer. Its leadership is unclear.

Walter emphatically expressed his lack of interest in the bylaws' revision or resolution. He sees this as a very low priority among our current tasks and challenges, and he is irritated these discussions occupy so much of Council's time. Linda Gerlach agreed, noting that the bylaws revision had been discussed since she joined the Council, without either noticeable progress or adverse effects. Jon then considered that the best next step may be for him and Steve to address their own answers to many questions on the table. Valerie recognized both sides of the impasse, acknowledging that bylaws revision was perhaps not of utmost urgency. She did, however, press Jon for the status of our IRS non-profit certification—important for some financial transactions and reports—which some time ago we paid an accountant to resolve. Steve and Jon recommended that the issue be addressed outside of the meeting.

DIACONATE

Bob Ross opened the September Diaconate meeting with a reading from St. Augustine's *Confessions*. The group then reviewed preparations for the Community Dinner, with Dawn Troutman taking the lead and Bob agreeing to help with publicity follow-up. We continue to look for volunteers to lead the October and November dinners.

The Deacons reviewed a number of congregational-care situations, from celebratory to seriously concerning. They further checked in about the Diaconate member board for the

Narthex and recruitment of coffee-hour hosts. The board is designed but awaits confirmation of essential information. For coffee hour, the group recommended returning to the large dry-erase board hung in the Parish Hall, rather than a signup list in the kitchen. Bob Ross inquired about a need for boundary training; Rev. Silver will look into suitable materials for the role of deacon.

Steve also noted his plans to preach several sermons on the Epistles. He closed the meeting with a prayer for God's presence to support Deacon outreach to congregants.

Focus on Stewardship

Whether dropped in the plate on a Sunday or mailed into the office, your offering contributions continue to be vital to our ministry. We realize that not everyone can give to the same degree, particularly as economic conditions have remained challenging. But FCC is grateful to receive contributions of **ANY AMOUNT** to these purposes:

Regular Offering—Collected anytime as unrestricted support for the church's general operations, ministries, and programs. This includes all pledges and payments in our annual stewardship effort.

Communion/Open Door Offering—Collected on first (communion) Sundays, directly funding our Open Door Ministry for community assistance (gas/food cards, rent, utilities, lodging, etc.). Any donation in a communion envelope goes to this fund, but you may contribute to the Open Door Ministry at any other time, too.

Special Offerings (e.g., the Lenten Lunch Bag Offering, Blanket and Shelter Sundays, and UCC offerings such as Neighbors in Need or One Great Hour of Sharing)—Collected once a year, in conjunction with an event or national campaign for a mission or service cause.

THANKS TO ALL for so generously supporting these diverse purposes, at FCC, in the Upper Valley, and beyond!

All contributions should be made payable to FCC, with any specific purpose (as applicable) written in the memo line, and either dropped in the collection plate or mailed to PO Box 230, Lebanon, NH 03766.

OUR LOCAL AND NATIONAL MISSION

Community Dinners Have Returned!

Many thanks to Dawn Troutman and the Diaconate for driving FCC's revival of monthly Community Dinners! Dawn baked lasagna for dinner on September 22—our first since February 2020—while Corrine Erskine, Ron Bailey, Phil Hammond, and several others helped out.



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 as high as 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 have the chance to donate new items and gift cards from our “Giving Tree.”

Giving Tree opportunities coming next month. Thanks to all of you for giving to our neighbors in the true spirit of Christmas!

UCC Hurricane Relief

Following two weeks of staggering devastation in the Southeast, the United Church of Christ's Global HOPE team has appealed for help in addressing the needs of the many affected families and communities, in both urgent and long-term relief.

Donating online is the fastest and most effective way to contribute:

support.ucc.org/hurricane-helene-relief

You may also mail a check to the UCC (memo “Hurricanes 2024”), PO Box 71957, Cleveland, OH 44194.

THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION



SEPTEMBER SCENES. Church St may be closed, but life continues at FCC! Demolition of the old fire station revealed a view of the church not seen in a century, while the Outing Club discovered the many charms of Farnum Hill. Lithuanian virtuoso Vytautas Kiminius played the enchanting birbyne, and kids of all ages enjoyed fun and fellowship on Kick-off Sunday.



MUSIC AT THE MEETINGHOUSE



**Music
at the
Meetinghouse**

FALL CONCERTS

All in the Sanctuary. Masks welcome but optional.

Jacqueline Schwab, Piano: Tunes for Troubled Times—Sunday, October 6, at 4:30 pm

Known for playing on over a dozen of Ken Burns' acclaimed documentaries, Jacqueline Schwab returns to FCC with a program to soothe souls, inspire reflection, and encourage agency and action in a challenging world. She'll offer engaging, vintage music from American, Celtic, Ukrainian, and Latin traditions. *Program details and admission cost TBD; more information on Jacqueline Schwab at www.jacquelineschwab.com.*

The Anonymous Coffeehouse—Fridays, Oct. 11 and 25, Nov. 8 and 22, Dec. 6, all at 7:30 pm

Our comfy community venue for live folk music returns for its fifth 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/.*

Classicopia: Fabulous Four-Hand Frolic—Saturday, October 12, at 7:30 pm

Pianists Dan Weiser and Elizabeth Borowsky share the keyboard for this thrilling four-hand program of French and American composers. Music of Georges Bizet, Gabriel Fauré, and New Hampshire's own Amy Beach, along with George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, which celebrates its centennial this year. *Adults \$20, FCC members \$15, children free; more at classicopia.org/concert/fabulous-four-hand-frolic/.*

Cameo Baroque: An All-Bach Benefit for the Open Door—Sunday, October 27, at 2:00 pm

Four superb musicians (Ernie Drown, Beth Hilgartner, Leslie Stroud, and Laurie Rabut) celebrate the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. *Free-will donation to benefit the Open Door Ministry; more at cameoarts.org.*

The Sunflower Quintet (Presented by UVMC)—Sunday, November 10, at 1:00 pm

This excellent wind ensemble offers musical variety from classical showpieces to dance tunes and a new commission, "Turning Toward." *Free-will donation benefits UVMC tuition assistance; more at cameoarts.org.*

Classicopia: Jewish Jazz—Saturday, November 16, at 7:30 pm

A new iteration of one of Classicopia's most popular programs, exploring the early-20th-century synthesis of Klezmer, classical, and jazz influences. *Adults \$20, FCC members \$15, children free; more at classicopia.org.*

Upper Valley Music Center Community Chorus—Saturday, November 23, at 4:00 pm

Henry Danaher, Organ—Saturday, November 23, at 7:00 pm

Cameo Baroque: Benefit for the Upper Valley Haven's 19 Days—Saturday, November 30, at 7:00 pm

Upper Valley Voices Winter Concert—Saturday, December 7, at 7:00 pm

Classicopia: Four-Hand Holiday—Sunday, December 8, at 2:00 pm

Bel Canto Chamber Singers Winter Concert—Sat., Dec. 14, 7:00 pm / Sun., Dec. 15, 4:00 pm

UVMC Messiah Sing!—Sunday, December 22, at 3:00 pm

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



2024 Lebanon CROP Walk

Walk! Serve! Donate! Sunday, October 13, 12:30
events.crophungerwalk.org/cropwalks/event/hanovernh

Neighbors in Need

Mental-Health Justice for All!
Special UCC Mission Offering



Music
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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