

Grace Notes

The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

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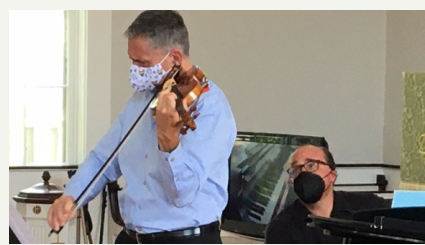
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The Pastoral Perspective

It's September, and that means a new church program year. The kids will return to the Children's Community Corner, the choir will resume singing, there will be a new book group this fall, and, sadly, all of this will take place with the delta variant of the coronavirus lurking in the background. We will need to be safe, take precautions, be prepared for adjustments, and accept a certain uncertainty as to when we can do the things we enjoy. Can you say *déjà vu*? If that doesn't work for you, how about *Groundhog Day*?

All of us can empathize with Bill Murray's hapless weatherman, as he is cursed to wake up every morning only to find out that he has returned to February 2. Murray's performance is hilarious, but also affecting. How can we not feel his pain when he realizes that he is trapped in a time-loop?

Well, many of us feel that way. Many of us thought we were going to be done with this pandemic long ago. Vaccines would be widely adopted, the fever would break, we'd be able to resume some sense of normalcy sometime this summer. And then? Delta. Boom—we're back where we were months ago.

Numbers of infections have climbed, as have fatalities. We are presented with mask mandates again. While some public activities have resumed, others have not. Each of us must once again reckon with our own personal tolerance for risk. And, as Christians, we must ask what risks we are willing to ask the community, including but not limited to our church, to bear. We are called to care for one another. As John Donne so memorably put it, "no man is an island." We are part of a larger whole, and that is something we should always remember.

As part of God's family, we are blessed. God, of course, never promised us an easy life or idyllic existence. But God did promise to be steadfast, to hold us in his care, to love us. We may well have tough days, or even trying years, but we are not alone.

I give thanks for each of you and all of you, for your presence and your support, for your dedication to being integral members of this church and this community.

Continued on Page 3

SUNDAY SERVICE

Sunday Worship at FCC

In-Person Service at 10:00 AM
Remote Viewing Available on Zoom

Please join us for worship every Sunday at 10:00, either in our Sanctuary or on Zoom. The weekly bulletin and Zoom link are emailed early Sunday morning; we also record the weekly service for posting later on YouTube.

All worshippers are required to wear masks at all times and observe distancing in the pews; singing and unison prayer are permitted, with masks. There is still no coffee hour after worship, and we ask that interaction be kept to a minimum.

Let Us Gather for Worship Together!

Greeters and Liturgists Needed

All are invited to serve as greeters/ushers, liturgists, or some other role in worship—reading the prayers of invocation or dedication, sharing a stewardship message, or even leading a children's moment.

As we continue to offer services online, we also need a volunteer **"ZOOM GREETER"** each week.

None of these roles requires special experience or training! If you're interested in serving in this way, please contact the church office.

SEPTEMBER 19

KICK-OFF SUNDAY!

Outdoor Service on Front Lawn, 10:00 AM

Come share in our annual inauguration of a new year for the **Children's Community Corner!** We are still working out details, but we look forward to supporting FCC's kids as they start the school year. No bouncy house this year—but we will be outside for the Blessing of the Backpacks!

Masks and distancing, while still encouraged, will not be required for this outdoor service, and no RSVP is necessary. Folding chairs will be available, or bring a comfy lawn chair if you prefer!

Spend Some Time in the Corner!

The **Children's Community Corner**, that is! We'd like to involve more of our congregation's adults in engaging with FCC's great kids on Sunday mornings.

Volunteers will either take children outside or work on indoor crafts, as well as share a light snack with them. Our ultimate purpose for this interaction is **mentorship, not just supervision.** Please consider offering your time to our young people—thanks!

If you are interested in volunteering or have any questions, please contact Nan Parsons at nlp3721@yahoo.com or 603-863-8354.

Neighbors in Need: "Unfailing Love"

Special UCC Mission Offering in September/October

The Neighbors in Need program supports ministries of justice and compassion across the US. Two-thirds of the collection supports the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries for various local and national initiatives, advocacy efforts, service projects, 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 populations.

This year, NIN is focused on serving homeless and immigrant neighbors and their communities.

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



NHC-UCC ANNUAL MEETING 2021

Building Beloved Community



Saturday, October 16 (Register Online by 10/4)

All are invited—lay or ordained leaders, congregation members, friends, visitors—to participate remotely in the 220th Annual Meeting of the NH Conference of the UCC. This year's theme is inspired by Lamentations 3:22-23: "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is God's faithfulness."

Keynote speakers are the Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund and the Rev. Chad Abbott, who will each consider ways to rebuild faith and community following the pandemic. In addition to the business meeting and other plenary events on October 16, optional connecting sessions run from October 5-17.

FCC will pay for up to four delegates(\$25/person); online registration open through Monday, October 4.

For complete details and schedule, please visit the NH Conference meeting webpage—www.nhcucc.org/conference-ministries/2021-annual-meeting.

Congratulations **Eliot Fay!**



We are delighted to report that **Eliot Fay**, a member of FCC and member-in-discernment with the Grafton-Orange-Sullivan Association, has been called to serve as Pastor of the Congregational Church of Nelson, NH (UCC). Eliot's first Sunday leading his congregation in Nelson will be September 19.

Rev. Steve Silver and our Deacons have supported Eliot's journey to ordination over the past few years, working closely with him as he's successfully completed each stage of the process. **We wish him and his family all the best as he takes up this new call in Nelson!**

The Pastoral Perspective, *continued from Page 1*

Yes, I'm sick of masks. And of the virus. And dealing with the pandemic. But all of this is part of the hand we have been dealt. And rather than focus on all that is wrong, I will instead focus on all that is right, on the technology that lets us maintain our connections; on the faith that sustains us; on the God who is with us, always and forevermore; and, most of all, on Jesus, who will guide us through all these troubled days to a future that is brighter and full of hope and the Lord's grace.

Yours faithfully,

Steve

FCC's Building Use Policy

As with in-person worship services, we have begun to bring concerts and other familiar events back to FCC. Even with high local rates of COVID-19 vaccination, we continue to be cautious about the pandemic.

All users, regardless of vaccination status, are required to wear masks and maintain physical distance (whenever possible) while inside our building. FCC strongly encourages vaccination; groups may even require that for all those who attend their events. FCC'S POLICIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Our Open Door Ministry

Supporting Our Community, One Gift Card at a Time

Throughout the year, our neighbors come to the church office seeking assistance. Whether it's a tank of gas for the car, some food for dinner, or a payment toward rent or an electric bill, our congregation is able to help, thanks to the **OPEN DOOR MINISTRY**. Available to anyone in Lebanon and surrounding towns, this ministry is one of the most vital services we extend to our community—all the more vital amid the economic and mental-health consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We don't ask questions about need or use; the "Open" Door is just that. We do ask people to wait at least four months between requests, only because the overall need is so great. FCC has been able to respond to that need for years, but we *never* have enough to assist all those who need it—and **demand has increased considerably over the past decade, during which time we've helped almost 500 people.**

Those who seek help from us haven't been irresponsible or lazy, and the large majority (about 75%) request assistance just once or twice. With just occasional exceptions, they don't become dependent or try to take advantage of the program. Some are chronically homeless; some have just been evicted for reasons beyond their control. Sometimes they've just moved to the area and need a hand getting started; sometimes they've lost a job or just started a new one. Some are driving to and from the hospital more often because they're caring for a family member; some have been referred to us by a counselor at WISE. **All are our neighbors.**



The Open Door is kept open by contributions to the monthly Communion Offering, with which we purchase \$25 gift cards for gas and food from **JAKE'S** and **PRICE CHOPPER**, respectively. This is supplemented by the Mission and Social Action Fund (from the Dole Trust), which provides modest assistance for rent and utilities. **In any of these cases, our ability to support those in need depends on you, our congregation. Because you give each month, we can help a lot of people. Your neighbors thank you!**

CONGREGATIONAL RETREAT AT HORTON CENTER

All Are Invited!—Friday to Sunday, September 24-26
UCC HORTON CENTER, WHITE MOUNTAINS

This month the Meriden and Hooksett Congregational Churches are returning to the NH Conference's Horton Center on Pine Mountain, near Gorham, for fellowship, recreation, and worship amid gorgeous natural beauty. Meals and clean-up are collaborate efforts, but the schedule is otherwise flexible; attending the whole weekend is not required. **Cost is \$30/night (\$25 for children); assistance available from FCC.**



RSVP TO THE CHURCH OFFICE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

Please let us know as soon as you can if you're interested in coming, for all or part of the weekend, as we do need to coordinate with the other churches.

OUR MISSION NEAR AND FAR

Hearts You Hold



Meeting the Needs of Immigrants and Refugees

Hearts You Hold, a non-profit organization based in Thetford, VT, offers immigrants, migrants, and refugees new, self-chosen items they may need or want. HYH and its local partners help recipients determine these items—from diapers to bikes, clothing to appliances—and learn how to obtain them. Donors then fund the requests on HYH's website. In two years, donors have funded almost 900 requests!

HYH believes immigrants, migrants, and refugees should feel valued, respected, and appreciated, in part by asking them what they need and want.

Visit heartstyouhold.org to donate and learn more. And don't miss Cameo Baroque's Benefit Concert on Sunday, September 19, at 4:00 pm!

The 2021 Lebanon CROP Walk

Sunday, October 10, at 12:30 pm

Begun in 1969 as a single walk in Bismarck, ND, the CROP Hunger Walk has long been a national project run by Church World Service. Happening year-round, CROP Walks across the country raise about \$9 million annually to fight food insecurity and poverty worldwide.

This year's walk will once again happen in person, and all are welcome to walk. However, we will not host our usual hot lunch at church. All contributions should be made online (not through FCC).

YOU can help in either or both of these ways...

Walk!—Walk on your own or get a small group together. Get your friends and family involved, too!

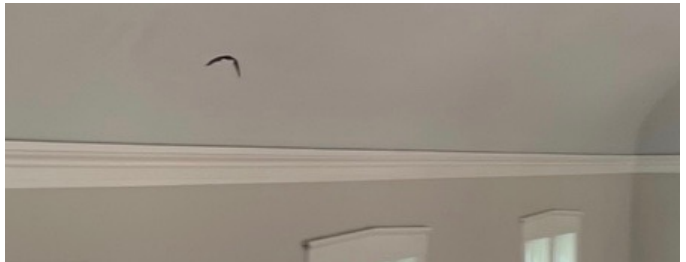
Donate!—Sponsor an individual walker, or give online at crophungerwalk.org/.



www.cropwalk.org

Questions? Contact the church office or visit www.crophungerwalk.org.

SUMMER WORSHIP AND WILDLIFE. We celebrated communion outdoors on August 1 (somewhat mask-free!); a bat ventured far beyond the belfry into an empty sanctuary on a Saturday afternoon; Barb Jones scouted lawn-care options on a trip to the Faroe Islands.



Do Your Part to Fill the Cart!

Greater Lebanon continues to struggle with poverty and food insecurity, exacerbated by the economic challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. To address this need, we've resumed collecting items in our shopping cart in the Parish Hall, for a different beneficiary each month.

**In September, we'll collect non-perishable food and personal-care items for
THE UPPER VALLEY HAVEN**

*Thanks for fighting poverty and hunger
in our wider community!*

MUSIC AT THE MEETINGHOUSE



**Music
at the
Meetinghouse**

Live Music Returns to FCC!

All in the Sanctuary. Masks and distanced seating required.

Virtuoso in Every Way: Cecylia Barczyk and Elizabeth Borowsky—Saturday, September 18, at 4:00

Join us for a celebration of virtuosity with internationally known cellist Cecylia Barczyk and her daughter, local pianist and teacher Elizabeth Borowsky. The program includes François Francoeur, Ludwig van Beethoven, Ernest Bloch, and Francis Poulenc. Elizabeth has given several wonderful concerts here over the years and is excited to return to our Sanctuary! Admission by free-will donation (\$20 suggested).

Cameo Baroque: Benefit Concert for Hearts You Hold—Sunday, September 19, at 4:00

Ernie Drown, Beth Hilgartner, Leslie Stroud, and Laurie Rabut share their considerable musicianship with us in a program of French Baroque chamber music. All Cameo events support a local non-profit, in this case **Hearts You Hold**, a Thetford-based organization that addresses the needs of immigrant and refugee families in the Upper Valley (for more on HYH, see previous page). Come support FCC's community mission while enjoying an excellent program! Admission by donation (\$20 suggested); for more, please visit cameoarts.org.

Classicopia: Jessica Deskin and Elizabeth Borowsky, The Nature of Life—Saturday, October 2, at 7:30

Pianist Elizabeth Borowsky will be joined by her longtime friend Jessica Deskin, a widely successful singer/songwriter and vocal and piano teacher based in Annapolis, MD. Jessica's musical expertise ranges from classical genres to jazz, musical theater, and top-40 pop. Adults \$20, FCC members \$15, children free; for more details and discounted advance tickets, please visit classicopia.org.

The Anonymous Coffeehouse—Fridays, September 24, October 8 and 22, all 7:30 pm

Our comfy community venue for live local music returns! Conceived as an informal "listening room" for emerging musicians, each show features several acoustic acts. For more, please visit anoncoffee.org.



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
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DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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Meetinghouse

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All in the Sanctuary. Masks and distanced seating required.

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SEPTEMBER 19

KICK-OFF SUNDAY

Plan to join us outdoors on the front lawn!

It's time for us to celebrate a new school year for the **CHILDREN'S COMMUNITY CORNER!** No bouncy house this year, but we will bless our backpacks outside on the front lawn—followed by a pizza picnic (*weather permitting*).

First Congregational Church of Lebanon

The Rev. Stephen R. Silver, Pastor

Ernie Drown, Organist and Choir Director • Nancy Parsons, Children's Community Corner

Barbara Teeter, Chair of Deacons • Linda Jacobs, Chair of Church Council • Barbara Jones, Moderator

Brian Clancy, Church Administrator

Church Office Hours: Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, 9:00-12:00 (or by appointment as needed)

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