

December 2014 Circuit Rider

First Congregational Church of Lebanon, UCC
588 Exeter Road ~ P. O. Box 125
Lebanon, CT 06249

"We seek to demonstrate God's Spirit through worship, witness, and ministry to the needs of the people in the church and the community."

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Our Prayer List

Carl Fernald

Bill Jahoda

Judi Bergeron

Ruth Dillon

Norma Geer

Stan Fuller

Shirley Brodeur

Joyce Cady

Fay Morehouse

Jean Souter

Barbara Rodman

Fred Wright

Jack Pelto

*Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors. – Luke 2:14*

Pastor's Letter

Dear Friends,

"The season of Advent - the four Sundays leading up to Christmas Day - is a special time for believers. It challenges us to pause and remember the hope we have during a stressful season that all too often emphasizes greed and money. Advent allows us the time and space to refocus our hearts and minds on Jesus - the true hope of the season." Under Wraps, Leader Guide, p. 7, Abington Press, 2014.

I hope you will consider joining this three-week Advent Adult study class as a way of finding time and space to focus on the hope Advent brings to our lives. I will be offering this course on Tuesday evenings, December 2nd, 9th, and 16th at 7 p.m. in the Memorial Room and again on Wednesday mornings, December 3rd, 10th and 17th at 9:30 a.m. in the Memorial Room. Part of the session will be watching a DVD focusing on God's gift to us in the person of Jesus and studying the birth stories of Jesus from the gospels. Please - just come and bring your Bible - it will be your time and space to renew your spirit!

On December 7th during our 10 a.m. worship, we will receive new members into our church family. A meeting for new members with the deacons will be on Thursday, December 4th at 6:30 p.m. in the Memorial Room. If you haven't spoken to me of your interest, please call me at 860-642-2557 or email me at PastorSharonLed@att.net. I will look forward to visiting with you!

On December 14th, during the 10 a.m. worship we will decorate our sanctuary Christmas tree while we sing carols and following the service we will join our children in the Fellowship Hall for the annual Children's Pageant. Rev. Mary and the children have been working hard on this so let's all support our children!

On December 14th, Sunday, at 3 p.m., we will hold our "Service of Remembrance." The holidays can be very difficult at times because of loved ones who have died. This is a quiet service where you can light a candle on our communion table in memory of those special loved ones.

On December 24th, Christmas Eve, there will be three services; 4 p.m. is a traditional service with Holy Communion, at 7 p.m. a family service with live Nativity and the Christmas story and 11:30 p.m. a Candlelight service led by our Confirmation class.

December is a wonderful month!!!

*Love and joy,
Pastor Sharon*

Lofty Thoughts December 2014

Luke 2:7, “. . . and she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.” (*King James Version*).

All these many years, hearing that verse over and over again, I never thought about the words “swaddling clothes.” Well, not until June 2014, when my first great granddaughter, Gretchen, was born in Providence, R. I. Margeaux, her mother, showed me how the nurses wrap the baby in a large thin blanket, “swaddling her.” The baby’s arms are straight against her sides, the blanket has one corner turned up and sewn so that the feet can be tucked in, and then the wrapping begins. A corner from right to left and around the back, then left around to the right, and the last corner is around the shoulders, neck, and head. She looks like a papoose and a little mummy. She can’t move, but I guess it calms the baby, makes her feel secure. The belief was, that it kept the baby’s limbs straight to prevent crippling. Also, the baby felt as if she were still in the womb. I was in awe how this tradition came down through the ages. I feel comforted knowing this ‘human-ness’ about Baby Jesus. That He came into the world as we all did, grew as a boy, learning about his Heavenly Father.

I worked with a junior choir many years ago and an anthem we sang was, “Love Came Down at Christmas.” When I hear the Christmas story I think and feel ‘LOVE!’ and that God gave the greatest gift, Jesus.

We light four special candles during Advent: Hope, Joy, Peace, and Love. I know when I held Gretchen in my arms; I was overcome, with tears filling my eyes. It was the wonder of birth, the excitement of another generation, the prayers held in my heart for her time on earth. Did Mary feel those things, too?

Merry First Christmas, little Gretchen! Happy Birthday, Little Jesus!

Just a note,

Jean Souter

Severe Weather Cancellations



In the event of severe weather, please check for cancellations of Sunday morning worship services and church activities on WFSB TV Channel 3, church website, or you may contact any deacon.

2014 Annual Reports

Board and committee reports are due by the end of December. If you would please e-mail them to the office, it would help tremendously.

Service of Remembrance Sunday, December 14th ~ 3:00 p.m.

The holidays can be a difficult time for those who have recently lost loved ones. At this special Service of Remembrance, you are invited to light a candle in memory of your loved one.

If you are unable to attend this service, please contact a Deacon or call the church office at 860-642-6179 with the names of the people you want remembered, and Pastor Sharon will light those candles and mention their names.

Sanctuary Tree Decorating

On Sunday, December 14th, the church family will decorate our sanctuary Christmas tree during a special part of the worship service. The deacons invite everyone to bring a special ornament to be shared with the congregation during this wonderful annual activity. Ornaments will be provided if you wish to use one from a prior year.



The flower committee invites anyone who would like to share flowers from their yard for our church's communion table on any Sunday to please do so. It never has to be for a specific occasion or event. If you feel inspired, and we hope that you will, just let Sylvia Ryan, Tracy Kelley or Nancy Magnuson know by Saturday each week or sign up on the calendar in the foyer. Thank you.

Bread feeds the body indeed, but flowers feed also the soul. - The Koran



CAT'S MEOW VILLAGE COLLECTION

We are excited to bring the Cat's Meow Village Collection replica of our church. The collectibles were designed by the Art Department of this company. To purchase please contact Stan Fuller at 860-642-1872 or the church office at 860-642-6179. Price of the collectible is \$15.00. These will make a great gift for birthday, anniversary or Christmas.

Epiphany Sunday ~ January 11th

Sunday, January 11th, our church will celebrate Epiphany. Epiphany commemorates the visit of the magi to the Christ Child. In 1999, we began a tradition of giving paper 'star gifts' to the congregation on Epiphany Sunday. The paper stars are inscribed with a word for the recipient to reflect on throughout the year. Some of us post them as bookmarks in our Bibles or daily readings, tuck them in our wallets, or prop them up on a shelf. Whenever we see 'our star' (or a star shape anywhere), we remember the message of love and hope, peace, and joy, and the lessons that Jesus taught. It's a simple reminder to refocus our busy lives. Please join us on January 11th. There will be a star for you!



GIU
News

*Youth group is open to all youth
in 5th grade through 12th.*

*December 12th ~ 3:00-9:30 p.m.
Movie Night & Help with Date Night*

Board of Outreach News

It's a Joy to Give

Neighbors Helping Neighbors Wish List 2014

DECEMBER – *Stuffing & Baked Beans (no pork)*

Happy House

Need a Holiday gift idea? How about helping another family? Beginning December 7th and continuing throughout the Advent season, we will be collecting donations to purchase another Happy House. The cost to purchase one through the Haitian Health Foundation is \$1,250. During coffee hour on December 7th we will have a mock-up Happy House on display in the Fellowship Hall. Please stop by and see how your donation will help another family. Donations will be accepted during coffee hour each Sunday or you may mail your donation to the church (please note Happy House in the memo section of your check). Donation cards will be available if gift was made in someone's name. Please contact a member of the Board of Outreach with any questions.

Christmas Schedule

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|---------------|---|
| December 6th | Live Nativity on the Green ~ 3:00 p.m. |
| December 7th | Worship Service 10 a.m.
Confirmation Class 5-6:30 p.m. |
| December 14th | Worship Service & Children's Pageant 10 a.m.
Sanctuary Tree Decorating
Service of Remembrance 3 p.m.
Confirmation Class 5-7 p.m. (prepare for candlelight service) |
| December 21st | Christmas Sunday Worship 10 a.m.
Staff Hosting Coffee Hour
Carol Sing at Studio 88 (90 S. Park St. in Willimantic) ~ 2:00-4:00 p.m.
Confirmation Class 5-6:30 p.m. |
| December 24th | Communion Service 4 p.m.
Family Service 7 p.m.
Candlelight Service 11:30 p.m. |
| December 28th | Worship Service 10 a.m.
No Confirmation Class |
| December 31st | New Year's Eve Potluck Dinner & Dance ~ 7:00 p.m. |

New Year's Eve

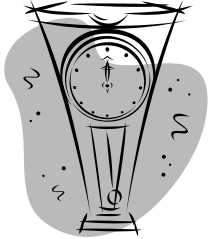
Food, Fun & Dancing

December 31st ~ 7 p.m.

First Congregational Church of Lebanon

Potluck Dinner

(No alcohol)



Square, line and round dances.

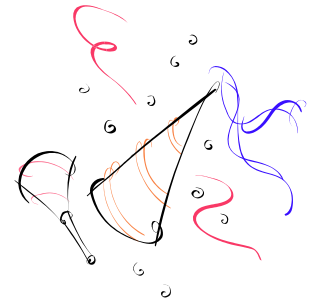
(No experience necessary!)

Everyone is welcome,

Families and singles!

Donation - \$8 per person

(children 16 and under free)



Advent Bible Study

Under Wraps - The Gift We Never Expected



“From the beginning, the Bible tells of a love story between God and his people. As the story works its way through the Old Testament into the New Testament, there are twists and turns but the ending is always clear – God’s plan is to rescue his people. And so God sent Jesus. God gift-wrapped himself in human flesh so he could come and live among us and offer us life and salvation that we could never gain on our own.” Under Wraps, Leader Guide, back cover, Abington Press, 2014

Under Wraps, by Jessica LaGrone, Andy Nixon, Rob Rendroe and Ed Robb, is an Advent experience that explores the character of God described in the Old Testament and then revealed through Jesus Christ. Please bring your Bible and join us for this three-week study in the Memorial Room either Tuesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. beginning December 2nd or Wednesday mornings at 9:00 a.m. beginning, December 3rd.

Live Nativity ~ December 6th

The youth from the Franklin Congregational Church and Lebanon Faith Communities will present, *The Christmas Story—A Live Nativity*, Scripture based, on Saturday, December 6th, at 3:00 p.m. on the Lebanon Green. The youth from the area churches are invited to portray the witnesses to the story (angels, shepherds, wise men, etc.) in simple costumes; there are no speaking roles. All church members are invited to support our youth in the true meaning of Christmas and sing along. In case of rain the event will be held in the Congregational Church Fellowship Hall; in case of sleet or heavy snow cancellation will be posted on Channel 3. Free-will donations and non-perishable food/toiletry items will benefit the Neighbors *Helping Neighbors* food pantry. For more information contact: Anne McAwley-LeDuc at 860-642-1786.





SCRIP - NEW FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON!



With the turning of the calendar, it is time to start thinking about Christmas lists and who to buy for? What to get them? Will They Like it? Our SCRIP gift card program has cards available to more than 600 stores, restaurant and businesses. What is even better is getting that new “gadget” first! Well here is what is new to our SCRIP program and in time for Christmas.

	ZAPPO'S	\$25.00	9%
	PETCO	\$25.00	7%
	PEP BOYS	\$25.00	8%
	AVIS CAR RENTAL	\$50.00	8%
	BUDGETCAR RENTAL	\$50.00	8%
	ORIENTAL TRADING	\$25.00	9%

Also, have you ever had your groceries delivered via Peapod or ShopRite? Well the gift cards from our SCRIP program are accepted as a method of payment. How sweet is that?

So in this time when getting a gift card is the perfect gift, think about who is on that special Christmas list of teachers? Bus driver's? Far away family? Co-workers? Coaches? Tough to buy for family member? Check out our list of stores and get them a gift card to their favorite store. Order forms are on the bulletin board in the foyer or on the church website. Drop your order off in the SCRIP mailbox by Sunday and cards will be ready for pick up the next Sunday. It's that simple. Share the program with your family, friends and neighbors. **Last day to order to have cards for Christmas is DECEMBER 7TH!!**



See or contact Phil Johnson with any questions.



LEBANON CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH - SCRIP PROGRAM PARTIAL INVENTORY

SUBWAY \$10

EXXON/MOBIL \$50

ITUNES \$15

TARGET \$25

FRIENDLY'S \$25

WAL-MART \$25

HOME DEPOT \$25

LOWES \$25

L.L.Bean

ACE HARDWARE \$25

DUNKIN' DONUTS \$10

