

## December 2015 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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Sue Vigue, Chair of Music Comm.  
Phone: 860-642-4761

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### Our Prayer List

Fay Morehouse	Jan VanWoerkom	Joyce Cady	Lucy Todd
David & Marion Fields	Ellen Pelkey	Joan Dutko	Jean Souter
Norma Geer	Michele Barrett	Karen Fuller	Stan Fuller
Deanna Kokoszka	Judi Bergeron	Carl Fernald	Dan McGuire
Barbara Rodman	Fred Wright	Neil Whitehead	Lee Schuett

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“Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” ~ Luke 2:14

## Pastor's Corner

The pace of life quickens. Each passing day becomes busier than the day before. There's more to be accomplished than seems possible. Are the cards all addressed and sent? Do I need to get over to the mall again? It's so hectic; at times, almost frantic. Do I have a gift for him, for her? When's the office party again? Don't forget to put water in the tree. Are we having "merry" yet? What if we get a snow storm?

Advent and Christmas at the church will be islands of peace from the churning seas of the season. Quiet time for contemplation await us here, as we remember a Biblical mother "who pondered all these things in her heart." Pondering one's hopes and dreams for life these days: doesn't that sound good? Pondering the significance of God incarnate, Emmanuel; doesn't that feel important? Pondering love and the light of our Lord entering a world that has been growing darker by the day; there's reason for joy, as well as happiness.

Children, grandchildren, church school children, bright with expectation and even more excitement than always, bring great joy to us and smiles to our faces. How we love singing and hearing the carols of Christmas; more smiles. The gospel account of "no room in the inn, but there's a stable" and of "she brought forth her first born, a son, wrapping him in swaddling cloth and laid him in a manger;" and of "shepherds abiding in the fields by night;" that very same night when the heavenly host announced: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace."

This is why we come and what we'll find in our church these next days and weeks. Let's not miss a moment of it.

Advent and Christmas Blessings to you,

Bob

### *Christmas Schedule*

*November 29th, First Sunday of Advent – Lighting the Candle of Hope*

*December 6th, Second Sunday of Advent with Communion – Lighting the Candle of Peace*

*December 13th, Third Sunday of Advent – Lighting the Candle of Joy*

*Service will be followed by the pageant.*

*December 13th, Service of Remembrance at 3:00 p.m. The lighting of candles of remembrance.*

*December 20th, Fourth Sunday of Advent – Lighting the Candle of Love*

*December 24th – 4:00 p.m. – Christmas Eve worship with communion and lighting of the Christ candle.*

*7:00 p.m. – Christmas Eve worship of lessons and carols and lighting of the Christ candle.*

*11:30 p.m. – Christmas Eve Candlelight Service and Lighting of the Christ candle.*

# Lofty Thoughts December 2015

I am sitting here thinking, 'How can I tell the story of Christmas again this year? How can I make it exciting for all who know it well, yet are, as many others are, caught up in the activities of the holiday?' But, I like challenges. It gives me the opportunity to recall the memories stored in the gray matter known as the brain, bring those thoughts to the surface, put words together, and write.

Christmas, for me, starts with the music, not just with the blaring of the radio with its much-repeated carols and contemporary songs, but of choral works and anthems, and, of course 'The Messiah.' Many of these tell the true story of Christmas. There is a lovely song we are singing in my senior group called '*How Far Is It To Bethlehem?*'

*How far is it to Bethlehem?*

*Not very far.*

*Shall we find the stable room lit by a star?*

*Can we see the little child, is He within?*

*If we lift the wooden latch, may we go in?*

*May we pet the creatures there, oxen, ass or sheep?*

*May we peek like them and see Jesus asleep?*

*May we touch His tiny hand? Will He awake?*

*Will He know we've come so far, just for His sake?*

*Great kings bring Him precious gifts, but we do not.*

*Sweet smiles on our lips are all we've brought.*

*For God in His mother's arms slumbers so deep.*

*On this humble bed of straw, sleep, Jesus, sleep.*

*How far is it to Bethlehem?*

*Not very far.*

*(by Frances Alice Chesterton)*

Every year, the faithful take the trip to Bethlehem as scripture is read. We see young Mary, her baby almost due, as she travels on a small donkey. Joseph, her husband, is nearby, anxious to find a room for his tired wife. The only thing available is the stable where they go, and eventually, as the hours progress, the Baby Jesus is born. The heavens ring with angels' song; the shepherds, led by a star, come to adore; the kings arrive from afar bringing precious gifts. It is a night of great beauty and of enormous joy! The Savior has arrived and sleeps in His mother's arms. Amen and amen.

Just a note,  
Jean Souter

## Advent Bible Study

Dec. 2nd ~ Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 1:68-79 & Philippians 1:3-11

Dec. 9th ~ Isaiah 12; Luke 3:7-18 & Philippians 4:4-7

Dec. 16th ~ Malachi 5:2-5a; Luke 1:39-45 & Hebrews 10:5-10

You are invited to join the Bible study focus on the Advent scriptures for each Sunday (listed above). It would only be a three week commitment and, as such, a good opportunity to experience Bible Study with Bob. All are welcome. We begin at 9:30 a.m. each of the three Wednesdays.

## It's a Joy to Give

Neighbors Helping Neighbors Lebanon Food Bank Wish List 2015

**December** – Stuffing, Baked Beans (no pork) & Kids' Snacks

## 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.

## Flower Committee

The Flower Committee would like to remind the congregation that if you would like to place an arrangement in the sanctuary for Sunday service there is a sign-up calendar in the foyer or call the church office. If it is a last minute thought just call a flower committee member by Saturday morning. We also invite everyone to please consider sharing flowers, grasses, branches of beauty, from your gardens or yards for any Sunday morning.

Thank you,  
Sylvia Ryan, Nancy Magnuson,  
Tracy Kelley

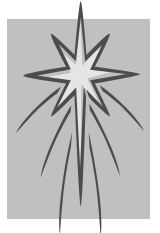


## Happy House

**Need a Holiday gift idea? How about helping another family?** Beginning December 6th 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. 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.

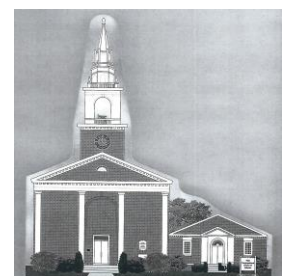
## Epiphany Sunday ~ January 10th

Sunday, January 10th, 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 10th. There will be a star for you!



## Cat's Meow Village Collection

**Do you need a unique birthday or Christmas gift? How about a small wooden replica of our church created by the Cat's Meow Village Co.? Collectible is \$10 and is available by contacting the church office at 860-642-6179.**



**Service of Remembrance**  
**Sunday, December 13th ~ 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 Wright will light those candles and mention their names.



***Board of Christian Education News***

**Christmas is just around the corner!**

**The Board is getting ready for the children's GRAND PERFORMANCE of the Christmas story! The pageant is December 13th and it is looking to be a great one!**

**We will be sponsoring our annual "Date Night" on Friday, December 11th, from 4 - 9 pm in the Fellowship Hall. ALL AGES ARE WELCOME. They will be making cookies for the pageant and rehearsing. Pizza for dinner! They can bring friends, too; this is a DATE NIGHT for parents to hang out with their friends, go to the movies, or GO SHOPPING!**

**Looking ahead to January, the Board is organizing something really cool; a WINTER CARNIVAL! The Carnival will be January 10th! More info coming soon.**

**Lots coming up, so mark your calendars with these important dates.**

**The Bread Box Mission**

**The Bread Box** is a group of individuals committed to fighting hunger in our local community by providing a folk music venue that is solely dedicated to collecting food and revenue for The Covenant Soup Kitchen and Emergency Food Pantry. We have transformed the sanctuary of St. Paul's Episcopal Church (220 Valley Street, Willimantic) into a theater with beautiful stained glass and a superb sound system. All proceeds always go to the charity as this is a completely volunteer operation.

The Bread Box has been an amazing endeavor. We are now in our sixth year and have raised over \$30,000 for the soup kitchen by bringing local and national musical acts to Willimantic. There has been an eclectic mix of musical styles from folk and blues to sea shanties and gypsy swing. We have met wonderful people, from the musicians who play to the wonderful crowds that come out to enjoy the music. We have also had the great fortune to be supported by monetary grants from the Lester & Phyllis Foster Foundation, and the family of Jim Romanow that have allowed us to make improvements to the stage, and the sound and lighting.

***Monthly Artist Showcase*** is held the third Wednesday of every month (September-May) from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Contact Bruce John at 860-429-4220 for details.

**Fall 2015 Music Series**

All shows are at 4:00 p.m.

(Tickets available at Willimantic Food Coop)

Sunday, December 6th ~ Two Troubadours - Kristen Graves & Lara Herscovitch

Sunday, December 13th ~ Rani Arbo & daisy mayhem

## Holiday Schedule

December 6th	Worship Service 10 a.m.
December 13th	Worship Service 10 a.m. Sanctuary Tree Decorating Children's Pageant Service of Remembrance 3 p.m.
December 20th	Christmas Sunday Worship 10 a.m.
December 24th	Rehearsal for the 11:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Service ~ 2:00 p.m. Communion Service 4 p.m. Family Service 7 p.m. Candlelight Service 11:30 p.m.
December 27th	Worship Service 10 a.m.
December 31st	New Year's Eve Potluck Dinner & Dance

## Confirmation Class Schedule ~ December 2015

(All classes are at 6:00 p.m. unless otherwise noted.)

December 2nd ~ Class

December 9th ~ Class

December 16th ~ Class

December 23rd ~ No Class

December 24th ~ Rehearsal at 2:00 p.m.

December 30th ~ No Class



## Confirmation Trip Schedule

February 21st ~ Shiloh Baptist Church

March 11th ~ Madina Masjid Mosque in Windsor

April 24th ~ Trip to Boston

## Live Nativity ~ December 19th



The youth from the Franklin Congregational Church and Lebanon Faith Communities will present, *The Christmas Story—A Live Nativity*, Scripture based, on Saturday, December 19th, 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's 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.



## CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS



I wish to order \_\_\_\_\_ 6" pot poinsettia for \$6 each.

\_\_\_\_\_ Red

\_\_\_\_\_ White

Donor: \_\_\_\_\_

The plant is given In Loving Memory Of: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Or In Honor Of: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(Check one)

\_\_\_\_\_ I will pick up my plant(s) after the service on Sunday, December 20, 2015.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please send plant(s) to a shut-in.

Please make check payable to The First Congregational Church of Lebanon. Orders and payments may be placed in the Flower Committee box or mailed to:

The First Congregational Church of Lebanon  
P.O. Box 125  
Lebanon, CT 06249  
Attention: Flower Committee

**Please return order by Sunday, December 6th.**

Contact Sylvia Ryan, Tracy Kelley, or Nancy Magnuson with any questions.

To Our Church Family:

On October 25th, our names were submitted to the congregation as the Church Council's recommendation to be the Search Committee for our next settled pastor. Church members present approved the Council recommendation. We will be commissioned during worship on November 29th. We are both respectful and grateful for the trust that has been placed in us.

Our committee met with Rev. Dr. Thomas Clough, Eastern Regional Conference Minister, CT UCC, who will work closely with us in the 'Search and Call' process. It is a detailed process, and it is important for us to be thorough so that we ultimately present to you as a candidate, the right person to serve as our next settled pastor.

Our first task is to prepare the Local Church Profile. This is a multi-page, very comprehensive document. We will get some of the data from church records and reports. Information gathered from the Holy Cow survey will be helpful as well. We may also be asking individuals, boards, and committees for additional input. Once our profile is completed, our vacancy will be listed in "UCC Employment Opportunities." We will then begin receiving and reviewing the ministerial profiles of applicants. The names of the applicants will be held in strict confidence within our committee. We ask you to respect the need for this to be so.

We will make every effort to keep you informed of our progress on a regular basis. Whether you did or did not do the online Holy Cow survey last spring, your input to this committee is welcome. You may contact any of us to share your thoughts.

During this time of transition for our church, we are fortunate and very grateful to have the leadership of our interim pastor, Reverend Dr. Robert (Bob) Wright. Please keep us in your prayers.

Yours in faith,

The Search Committee

*Janet Barton, Ken Beaudoin, Vanessa Coutu, Jim Gillespie, Audra Holmes, Sarah Olearnick, Chet Ryan, Hailey Tompkins, Phil Ziel, and Linda Wagner, Chairperson.*



## Refugee resettlement meeting: Dec 6 / First Mansfield / 1:30pm

The First Church of Christ in Mansfield Center, Congregational, UCC will host an information meeting on refugee resettlement on Sunday, December 6 from 1:30 - 3:30 pm. We hope you can come; **you are encouraged to pass this invitation on** to friends, neighbors, congregants, co-workers and others you think might be interested in learning more about the current world-wide refugee crisis and what we in Eastern Connecticut might do to help.

The purposes of this gathering are to:

- Build our common understanding of the scope of the current refugee crisis, and learn about current UN and US policies and procedures concerning refugees;
- Describe the role of organizations that sponsor refugee resettlement, and learn about IRIS in particular (IRIS = Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services - the largest resettlement organization in CT);
- Learn the various ways individuals and broad coalitions of churches and other organizations can help resettle refugees. Particular attention will be paid to "co-sponsorship" and how a co-sponsoring initiative might be formed in our area.
- Share preliminary ideas about resources / people / organizations in the Quiet Corner might be identified and recruited to assist in refugee resettlement;
- Invite you to write elected officials demonstrating support for higher refugee entrance commitments into the US and support for greatly increasing the number of refugees allocated to CT.

Chris George, the Executive Director of IRIS will be with us; there will be time for Q+A and informal conversations.

There also will be some handouts, and we plan to offer refreshments so a quick "RSVP" to [firstchurchmansfield@snet.net](mailto:firstchurchmansfield@snet.net) will be greatly appreciated as it will help us prepare. If you're feeling led to bring a snack offering to the gathering, you will receive our praise and the wonderful warm fuzzy feeling that comes along with making a meaningful contribution. Thanks in advance!

First Church is located at 549 Storrs Rd (at the intersection of Routes 195 and 89). The small parking lot on Browns Rd. provides the best accessibility; parking is also available on the other side of the church building and in the bus stop adjacent to the church driveway. We urge you to car pool; overflow parking is about a block away.

These two links provide good information about the current refugee crisis.

The first focuses on Syria in particular

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/11/04/world/middleeast/syria-refugees-europe-crisis-maps-explainer.html?ref=world>

This one gives you a window into the lives of three children who are currently refugees. You will likely have to download a free app to view it properly; it's best on a tablet or laptop. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/08/magazine/the-displaced-hana.html>

Here's where to learn more about IRIS: [www.irisct.org](http://www.irisct.org)

Blessings!

Ann Plumley and Steve Lane

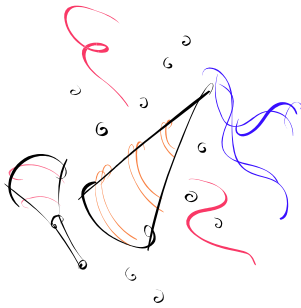
Co-leaders of the Quiet Corner co-sponsorship "exploration committee"

# New Year's Eve

Food, Fun & Dancing

December 31st ~ 7 p.m.

First Congregational Church of Lebanon



Potluck Dinner

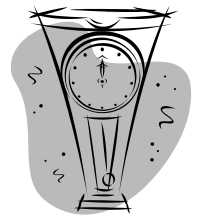
(No alcohol)

Square, line and round dances.

(No experience necessary!)

Everyone is welcome, families and singles!

Donation - \$8 per person  
(children 16 and under free)



## Sanctuary Tree Decorating

On Sunday, December 13th, 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.



## *Neighbors Helping Neighbors*

*Neighbors Helping Neighbors is in need of frozen turkeys (12-15 lbs.) for their Christmas Baskets. If you would like to donate a turkey please see Tracy Kelley or Ellen Bauwens. Last day to donate is December 8th. Thank you.*



## **2015 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.