

January/February 2016 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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Phone: 860-642-4761

Our Prayer List

Fay Morehouse	Jan VanWoerkom	Joyce Cady	Lucy Todd
David 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
Pam Holley	John Sellick	Marion Fields	

“May the Lord give strength to his people!
May the Lord bless his people with peace!” ~ Psalm 29:11

Pastor's Corner

Advent and Christmas are barely past and Epiphany is upon us; but, ready or not, Lent is about to begin as of February 10th. Ash Wednesday marks the onset of the 40 day period of reflection and self-examination leading to the highest holy day of the Christian faith, Easter. In years past, many of the faithful would embark on a season of "self-denial," generally "giving up" something one enjoys. (I've joked in the past about giving up brussel sprouts myself.) More recent years some of us have added a new discipline of one sort or another: meditation, exercising, Bible study or the like. In either case, what's important is that we somehow view this seven week-long time as an especially sacred, and set-apart time for ourselves. Attending worship each week will help all of us maintain a strong spiritual focus through Lent 2016; so, if you haven't made a New Year's resolution yet, there's a suggestion.

While I'm concerned about Lent beginning so early in the year, the "upside" is that it presents us with the opportunity to set our spiritual direction for the ensuing year. I promise that I'll do my best each Sunday to encourage and inspire us along on the journey with Jesus all the way to the cross and beyond, the empty tomb. So, remember please that the journey commences on February 10th this year. I hope you look forward to the Lenten (referring to the lengthening days) sojourn here, as do I.

Blessings,

Bob

Confirmation Class Schedule ~ January 2016

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

January 6th ~ Class

January 13th

Help Board of Outreach with dinner in Willimantic.

January 20th ~ Class

January 27th ~ Class



Confirmation Trip Schedule

February 21st ~ Shiloh Baptist Church

March 11th ~ Madina Masjid Mosque in Windsor

April 24th ~ Trip to Boston

Lofty Thoughts January/February 2016

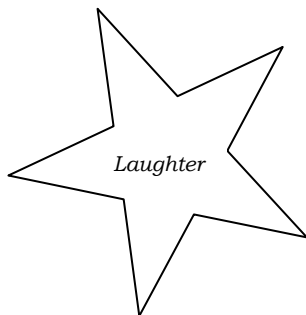


I always loved the story of the Bethlehem star, of the shepherds being told by the angels to follow it to Bethlehem, to the manger. And of the three kings, who after studying astrological signs in the sky began their journey to find a king, and they found him in the form of a baby.

For the past 17 years I have received stars on this special day in January known as 'Star Sunday,' always choosing two stars, and adhering them to the inside cover of my Bible. I dated them with the current year and referred to them all during the year, especially in Wednesday's Bible study class. If there were stars left over, I would ask for some to pass on to my children and eventually grandchildren, as they arrived, always explaining the story and the importance of Jesus' birth. It has become a tradition that always follows the Christmas story to continue God's blessing on all of us by the birth of Jesus.

Some of my stars read, "*enthusiasm,*" "*singing,*" "*excitement,*" "*planning,*" "*humor,*" "*thankfulness,*" "*grace,*" "*praise,*" and "*prayer.*" My stars for 2015 were "*delight,*" and "*laughter.*" I recall having quite a bit of both this past year!

Just a note,
Jean Souter



Lay Down Your Burdens at the Foot of the Cross...

The deacons will place the Lenten cross in the church foyer beginning Ash Wednesday, where it will remain throughout the Lenten season. A basket of stones will be located alongside it. You are invited during this season of reflection to take a stone, as a symbol of your burdens, and lay it down at the foot of the cross.

Annual Meeting ~ Sunday, February 7th

The Annual Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, February 7th. A potluck luncheon will precede the meeting. Snow date is the following Sunday, February 14th.

Bible Study

Bible Study resumes on Wednesday, January 6th, at 9:30 a.m. in the Memorial Room and everyone is invited to attend. We will be studying the Book of Isaiah. If you would like to purchase a student resource book they are \$10; you are welcome to attend without purchasing the book. Please contact the church office if you would like us to order you a copy (860-642-6179 or lebfirfirstcong@att.net).

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.



Service
February 10th
7:00 p.m.

2015 Church Year Photos Available Online

Teresa has made photos from the church year available online! There are pictures that were featured in the slideshow and many, many more! All pictures are available in digital download and print form for a small fee of \$1 per picture. This fee is to help cover the cost for using the website that the pictures are available on.

Visit: <http://teresastouch.smugmug.com/FCCLebanon/>
Password: LebCong1

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,
Tracy Kelley & Nancy Magnuson

Outreach News

Happy House

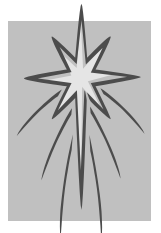
Throughout the month of January, we will be collecting donations to purchase another Happy House. The cost to purchase one through the Haitian Health Foundation is \$1,250. Donations will be accepted during coffee hour each Sunday or you may mail your donation to the church (please note Happy House in 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.

We are looking for your help!!

We are hosting a dinner at the Willimantic Baptist Church on Wednesday, January 13th. We are looking for volunteers to help prepare and serve or to sign-up to donate items for the meal. The menu will be Shepard's pie, green beans, rolls with butter and brownies. Please call Geri McCaw if you would like to donate or to help serve.

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!



FUN FUN FUN FUN FUN FUN

Bean Bag Toss



Eating Contests

LET'S KICKOFF THE NEW YEAR TOGETHER!!



Please join the Board of Christian Education for



Winter Carnival 2016!

Face Painting

January 10th!
Following the church service.

Bowling

FUN FUN FUN FUN FUN FUN

HOLIDAY HARVEST FAIR 2015

Thank you to all of our church family for all the ways you contributed to make the 2015 Holiday Harvest Fair a success! Whether you donated an item, baked something, bought something, bid on something, thought about it, had lunch or dinner, directed people to the parking area, helped set up or clean up, or just stopped by and chatted and smiled, THANK YOU!

This year, the Silent Auction was totally donated by members of the church family (as opposed to the past auctions where we had someone soliciting items from the merchants and organizations in the area) and we had an impressive variety of handmade items, appliances, collectibles, holiday-themed items, gift certificates, and a goldfish bowl complete with fish! We also had goods and services provided by some of the vendors. The auction netted approximately \$800. Our 'just for fun' Blue Table was a success and a very colorful addition with over 40 items in many categories. We were able to create 24 gift baskets for the Basket Raffle with the items you and the boards and committees donated, bringing in almost \$500. The Round Robin Crafters beautifully sewn and knitted items also brought in almost \$500. The Country Store, with homemade jellies, applesauce, and candy, apples, gourds, squash, local maple syrup, and live plants, as well as 'penny candy for a quarter' was a popular stop for shoppers, and made over \$300. The deacons' Bake Sale provided a bounty of sweet treats and homemade breads, bringing in over \$350, and the little Sunday School chairs, which we offered for sale and included a 'Paint Your Chair Workshop' all sold. Once again, the 'Kitchen Crew' provided coffee and beverages throughout the day and delicious lunch options including homemade soups, stew, and chowder and a variety of sandwiches made to order. Food for the Soul cooked up a great roast beef meal for the Holiday Harvest Dinner with a selection of homemade pies for dessert. All told, we realized a profit of \$3,986.48. Although we can't put a dollar value on it, the fun and fellowship of working together to accomplish the event, enjoying good food together, and seeing old friends is priceless.

If you have any input for the 2016 fair, please feel free to share with us. We hope that next year will be even better!

Kim Alleman, Linda Wagner, Ellen Bauwens, Priscilla Clesowich, Phil Johnson, Melody Lehoux, and Linda Wallace.



We have recently installed a system in the sanctuary called the "Hearing Loop System". This system works with hearing aids that have a "T-Coil" installed and sends sound directly to the hearing aid from the present sound system.

If you have a "T-Coil" in your hearing device, and you have the ability to turn it on (if it is not already turned on), turn it on so that you can hear the service better.

If you do not know if you have the "T-Coil" in your hearing device, or you do not know how to turn it on, contact your hearing device provider and ask what you need to do to make this work for you.

If you have any questions, see me after church and I will try to answer any questions you may have.

Art Wallace - Trustee

Nominations for Outstanding

Senior and Junior Steward

Special forms for nominations are available in the church foyer and also a box to receive your filled out form. **Nominations will close January 10, 2016.**

Hospitality Committee Meeting

There will be a short meeting for anyone who has expressed an interest in helping with coffee hour or is willing to help, in the Fellowship Hall at 9:15 a.m. on Sunday, January 10th. If you are not able to attend the meeting but are interested, please contact Ruth Tilley at 860-228-4085 or rtilley53@yahoo.com.



The Path to Zion

Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. Isaiah 2:3

Crazy world today. So much violence, so much fear, so much uncertainty. Doesn't seem like there is much time or energy for a faith journey to Zion, does it?

We often forget that trying to make sense of the world we live in is in itself a faith journey. As we try to understand the path of others, we evaluate our own trails and the directions we choose to follow.

*Is there something you would like to share about your faith journey with the church family? **The Path to Zion will be a monthly guest writing forum about how we, as followers of Jesus, perceive the world and its creator. It is unlike witnessing, which describes a personal relationship with God.***

It could simply be a poem that keeps you on a certain path (but tell us why). It could be a life event that changed the way you see God, or perhaps, just strengthened it. Whatever you want to share, it should be positive steps, which lead you into the direction of Zion.

To get started, this month we are printing some of the parables that members of the Bible study class wrote. If you would like to be a guest writer for a future Circuit Rider, please see Rev. Bob.

Bible Study 101

This past fall, the Bible study was on parables. With Pastor Bob leading us, and the workbook "Parables, Stories for Life in God's World," as a resource, we explored several of the parables taught by Jesus. We learned that there are three types of parables – Similitudes, Example Stories, and Parables Proper.

Similitudes contain accounts of real life situations, making comparisons with what is already understood and with something similar. Example stories contain created stories of action to be imitated or perhaps warning about behaviors to be avoided. Parables Proper are created stories of analogy comparing two different things to point beyond themselves to new meaning. For our final class, Pastor Bob invited us to write our own parable. These are some of the parables written by members of the class.

How shall the youth of the town save their town Art Center? The Art Center was loaned to the youth to keep them off the streets. Now a rich man has come along to purchase the center and land to build a shopping center. The Town Commission tells the youth they can buy the land for a huge amount of money. They try to raise the money, but fall short of the amount. So they decide to put on a show at the center. The rich man laughs at them, and persuades the commission that the building is old and should come down anyway. The youth block the bulldozers from knocking down the building. The news picks up the story. They raise the amount they need to save the center. Is the youth's goal different from the rich man's?

By Geri McCaw

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a huge mountain. If you drift away from it, it is still there.

By Oliver Manning

VETERAN'S DAY PARABLE 2015

Wrapping a scarlet cashmere scarf around her neck, she reached for the navy vicuna coat, fastening a jeweled flag pin to the lapel. "Did you put the flag out?" she asked.

"Yes," her husband replied, as he also pinned a flag to his lapel, "Ferragamo red or Burberry blue," he asked, holding up two silk ties.

"The red. It complements my scarf," she replied. "We need to get going, and we'll have to avoid Main Street and The Green. The parade and flag ceremony starts at 11:00. If we get caught up in that we'll get detoured or have to wait forever for the parade to pass. I want to get to the Veteran's Day sale at the mall and our lunch reservations are for 1 o'clock."

"Ok, then, he replied adjusting the knot on his tie. Let's go."

By Linda Wagner

A traveler happened to come upon a busy market place. There were many shoppers and vendors selling their wares.

The traveler noticed a small gathering of women, children and some elderly people. With piqued interest, he approached the crowd and noticed them kneeling on the ground in a circle. In the middle of the circle, he saw a man's figure. The traveler could not see his face, noticed he was wearing sandals and loose fitting white cotton pants.

The man seemed to be telling a story and the people circled around him were listening intently. As the traveler was making his way closer, there was much commotion behind him. There was a bearded man, charging through the crowd, waving a sword! His eyes fixed on the storyteller.

Without thinking, the traveler began throwing rocks at the charging man. He never made it to his target! The traveler turned around; it was then he noticed the crowd had not run away, but had made the circle tighter.

By Michelle Kersey

A Christian, a Jew, a Muslim and an atheist wandered into a beautiful, perfect garden.

*

They reasoned and debated about what they should do.

*

Then, they agreed to not touch it, and to just let it be.

*

They entered in peace, and they left in peace.

By Carla Dias