

March 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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Our Prayer List

<i>Fay Morehouse</i>	<i>Jan VanWoerkom</i>	<i>Joyce Cady</i>	<i>Norma Peterson</i>
<i>David Fields</i>	<i>Ellen Pelkey</i>	<i>Joan Dutko</i>	<i>Jean Souter</i>
<i>Norma Geer</i>	<i>Michele Barrett</i>	<i>Karen Fuller</i>	<i>Stan Fuller</i>
<i>Deanna Kokoszka</i>	<i>Judi Bergeron</i>	<i>Carl Fernald</i>	<i>Dan McGuire</i>
<i>Barbara Rodman</i>	<i>Fred Wright</i>	<i>Neil Whitehead</i>	<i>Lee Schuett</i>
<i>Phyllis Rodgers</i>	<i>John Sellick</i>	<i>Marion Fields</i>	<i>Jim Forrest</i>

*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time.
Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. ~ 1 Peter 5:6-7*

Pastor's Corner

I could hear the choir rehearsing; I could smell the coffee brewing; and communion was being setup by the deacons; and all of this was happening though we all woke up to below zero temps. Church worship was going to take place on that frigid first Sunday of Lent, also known as Valentine's Day this year. Soon, some children and families began arriving, two sweetly wishing me a cheery "Happy Valentine's Day" (thank you Abby and George) and more of the congregation gathered. It was a great testimony to the commitment of our membership to being the Church, no matter the outside temps; inside, it was all warm and loving, as it always is here! Personally, I felt blessed and grateful, and that God was present in the "sweet, sweet, spirit of this place."

As the daylight lengthens now noticeably, our journey will take us deeper into Lent until we arrive at Palm Sunday, Holy Week, then Easter, all in this 'merry month of March.' This is the very holiest of seasons and each Sunday, no matter the outside conditions, will be full of the same, sweet, and loving spirit as it did on the first, frigid Sunday. And we will all feel blessed and grateful for being here; I'm certain of it.

Blessings,

Bob

Confirmation Class Schedule ~ March 2016

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

March 2nd ~ Class

March 6th ~ Attend potluck & Muslim-Christian Conversation following service.

March 9th ~ Attend ecumenical service at our church at 7:00 p.m.

March 16th ~ Class

March 23rd ~ No Class

March 24th ~ Attend Maundy Thursday service at our church at 7:00 p.m.

March 25th ~ Attend Good Friday service at our church at 2:30 p.m.

March 30th ~ Class



Confirmation Trip Schedule

March 13th ~ Madina Masjid Mosque in Windsor

April 24th ~ Trip to Boston

Lofty Thoughts March 2016

From the Lofty Thoughts Archives ~ March 1999

I just received a gift – a book called *Everyday Sacred* by Sue Bender. I have not had time to read anything except the preface. It gave me an idea for a “Loft-y Thoughts.” It tells of how a monk would go out each day with an empty bowl in his hands. Whatever is placed in the bowl will be his nourishment for the day.

I thought about myself and visualized an empty bowl in my hands. With what would my bowl be filled? Every day is different and I am placed in many settings for hours at a time. I close my eyes and see friends offering spoonfuls of love and concern into the bowl. Sometimes it seems to be filled quickly. Perhaps I stumble and the bowl tilts and some spills out. I feel empty. Holding it carefully, I keep walking and discover a beautiful sunset, fragrant flowers, the laughter of a child, tears I wiped away, fill my bowl. Wherever I go, there is someone or something to fill my bowl. It is open and wanting and waiting.

We are like empty bowls waiting to be filled. We wait for God – who appears in so many forms of love – to fill our bowl.

Jesus took his “bowl” of wine at the Last Supper and passed it to his disciples to empty – declaring it to represent his sacrificial blood. He filled us!

When you pray during this Lenten season, hold your hands open-palmed – so that what you ask of the Lord will be received in your empty “Bowl” –

And you will be filled!

Just a note,
Jean Souter

Bible Study

Bible Study has resumed! We are currently studying the Book of Isaiah. Please join us Wednesday mornings at 9:30 in the Memorial Room; everyone is invited to attend.

Sanctuary Open During Holy Week

Beginning on Palm Sunday and continuing throughout Holy Week, the sanctuary will be open daily, from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., for prayer and meditation. Please enter through the main doors facing Route 207.



Palm Sunday Pancake Breakfast

On Sunday, March 20th, the Deacons will be serving their annual Pancake Breakfast from 8:15-9:30 a.m. We hope you will plan to attend this special time together and enjoy a wonderful breakfast!

Easter Egg Hunt March 27th

The Board of Christian Education invites all children in fourth grade and under to our annual Easter egg hunt on March 27th.

Please meet at the back of the Fellowship Hall following the service. Bags will be provided.



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

The deacons have placed the Lenten cross in the church foyer where it will remain throughout the Lenten season. A basket of stones is 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.

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 &
Jody & Gary Waldron



2016 Silver Lake Summer Calendar

Brochures detailing what is available at the CT UCC Summer Conference for children and young people in grades 4-12 are available on the table outside the office. The New London Association is making financial assistance available for those who could use the help. Parents: encourage your children to consider being a "Lakee." It is "a place to connect, make deep friendships, feel accepted for who you really are, embrace the outdoors, play, pray,...." and grow closer to God. Just look at the brochure and see all the smiles on everyone's faces! Kids: you'll have one of the happiest, best weeks of your summer, perhaps of your life!



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.

First Congregational Church of Lebanon (UCC) Women's Prayer Shawl Ministry

WANTED: Handmade knitted or crocheted prayer shawls for those that need their spirits lifted. **Let us gather in the Memorial Room following worship on Sunday, February 28th, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.** for valuable women's fellowship time and prayer shawl making. Please bring your own supplies. Patterns will be made available. For further information, please contact Carla Dias at 860-642-7112 or farrisdias@outlook.com.

Muslim-Christian Conversation

The Outreach Committee of the First Congregational Church of Lebanon invites you to join in the conversation to be held in the Armstrong Fellowship Hall on Sunday, March 6, 2016 following a potluck meal at 11:15. Interim Minister, the Rev. Dr. Robert J. Wright, Jr., will engage with Bloomfield Imam Sammy Aziz and his wife, Vjosa, to engender a better understanding of Islam, and its veneration of Christianity's Jesus, as well as his mother, Mary.

Sammy Aziz serves as Imam of the Bloomfield Muslim Community Center and PrayerSpark.com. A graduate of Hartford Seminary's Chaplaincy Program, Imam Aziz has spoken at many churches and organizations on the importance of peace and salaam between Muslims and Christians, as well as Jews, the three "Abrahamic Religions." Vjosa is a respected public educator, currently an administrative assistant at Medina Academy, who frequently joins her husband in their effort to dispel ignorance about the Islamic faith.

The Church is excited about welcoming the Aziz's to Lebanon and invites the public to attend and take part in the conversation, which is scheduled to begin at noon on March 6th. Come dine with and/or come learn with us; and be fed.

Happy Homes of Haiti

The Outreach Committee of the First Congregational Church of Lebanon invites you to join with them in learning about the origins and work of the non-profit mission organization based in Norwich founded by Dr. Jeremiah J. Lowney back in 1982. Our speaker Marilyn Lowney has accompanied her father and volunteers for home building work weeks through the years and will also speak about those experiences and the possibility of those from the churches to participate in future 'work camps.' The members of the First Congregational raised and contributed funds to sponsor the construction of two more homes during this past Advent/Christmas, bringing the total donated by the church to eight homes.

The program will begin with coffee and refreshments at 7:30 p.m. and conclude about 8:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 2, 2016 and anyone interested is welcome to come and participate.



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.

If you would like to be a guest writer for a future Circuit Rider, please see Rev. Bob.

My Journey to Zion - Some thoughts by Jon Magnuson

For a number of years now, I've kept a tiny card on my desk at work that reads, simply, "*Dear Lord, I desire today that you will use my life as a channel of your love.*" The words on this small piece of paper, placed where I can't help but spot it several times throughout the often hectic day, serve as a constant reminder of how I believe God asks us each to be a reflection of, and witness to, His Grace and Love throughout our everyday interactions with others. Perhaps better than anything I could hope to author, this unassuming prayer captures my daily *Journey to Zion* - a journey, candidly-speaking, which like us all has both its high points and its challenges, but a journey just the same. When I stop to consider my personal *journey*, one which has unfolded chiefly for me during my adult years, and one which has been punctuated by life-transforming events including marriage, fatherhood, a clear and undeniable personal call to ministry (which continues to unfold!), and much more, it's impossible for me to not acknowledge God's great mystery and intervening presence in all things.

As I consider what I might share with you about my *journey*, I'm reminded of the moment back in 2001 when I was first approached by a member of our congregation's Board of Deacons and asked if I would consider joining the board that coming year. Our personal journeys are dotted by such moments, by opportunities offered, and by encounters with others. It is in how we respond to those moments, opportunities, and encounters that we are defined. My decision to accept the invitation to join the diaconate that coming February was one of those moments for me, one that unquestionably has shaped my ongoing *Journey to Zion* ever since. For it placed me on a new path, clearer to me at that moment than any other and through a newly focused service, of seeking a closer relationship with God and a more practiced life of spirituality in service to others.

This February I will begin my fourth term as a deacon in service to our congregation; and as in each preceding time, it is an opportunity that I am profoundly grateful for. Each term has helped further define my *journey* by presenting me with new challenges, deep joys, an increasing awareness of my own spirituality, and an appreciation for God's plan unfolding in my life and in my family's life. My earliest experiences as a deacon were, without question, a principle reason I decided to seek more formal religious education, resulting in my eventual graduation from Hartford Seminary. As a result of, and through, the many new relationships made during my seminary experience, and in the sharing of my growing faith with others during that time and since, I'd like to think that I was (and am) giving life to the words printed on that little prayer card on my desk - that I am, indeed, "*using my life as a channel of God's love.*"

I hope that what has come across here, as I share just a little about my personal *Journey to Zion*, is that it has been, and continues to be, a journey which is foremost about my desire to be a channel of God's love to others through all that I say and in all that I do - and doing so only by God's Grace, even within, and fully acknowledging, my own fallibility and limitations. Ultimately, emerging out of my *journey* is a desire to grow both through and in my personal relationships with others; to seek and witness the presence of God in all of my life circumstances; and to encourage and celebrate God's presence in the lives of those around me. I honestly have no idea what is ahead for me as I continue my *journey* (do any of us?), but if it's any indication, my Epiphany "Star" Sunday word this year is *Prayerfulness*. And so, if the prayer written on the small card at my desk serves as the guidepost for my *journey*, my desire then is that the following scripture verse be a constant marker and serve as words of encouragement for me along the way - "*Search my heart O God, and know me...*" (Psalm 139:23) Let the journey continue! Amen!

About the author-

Jon, along with his wife Nancy, have been active church members since 2000. Jon spends as much time as possible between work and work-related travel enjoying family, especially his twin sons' high school basketball and baseball games. He received his Master of Arts degree, with a focus in Ministry in Daily Life, from Hartford Seminary in 2013. Jon and his family live in Lebanon.



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.

For others in the congregation with hearing problems, we also have headphone devices that work with this system that will allow you to hear the service better. See one of the deacons for assistance.

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

Art Wallace - Trustee

Lenten Sermon Series 2016 **“The Prayer”**

March 6th	<i>Our Daily Bread</i> (Communion Sunday)
March 13th	<i>Forgiven – Forgiving</i>
March 20th	<i>Temptation - Evil</i>
March 27th	<i>Forever Amen</i>

Lenten Schedule (All services are at our church.)

March 9th	Ecumenical Lenten Service ~ 7:00 p.m. <i>Please bring an item for the Neighbors Helping Neighbors Easter baskets (children’s small toys, books, crafts, chocolate bunnies, etc.).</i>
March 20th	Deacon’s Palm Sunday Breakfast 8:30-9:30 a.m. Palm Sunday Service ~ 10:00 a.m.
March 24th	Maundy Thursday Service ~ 7:00 p.m.
March 25th	Good Friday Service ~ 2:30 p.m.
March 27th	Easter Sunrise Service and Breakfast ~ 6:30 a.m. Easter Service ~ 10:00 a.m.

HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS!!

March is a great time to start gathering information for the Scholarship Application. Think about your activities in the Church – this spring and previously.

Application forms are on line and there are copies on the table in the foyer. If you have any questions, please, contact a Deacon.

To Our Church Family:

We expect that at the time you are reading this March 2016 Circuit Rider, we will have begun to receive profiles of pastoral candidates interested in being our next settled pastor. Our Local Church Profile, the comprehensive document which describes our church, as well as the UCC Job Opportunity listing has been submitted, reviewed, and approved by Rev. Dr. Thomas Clough, our Eastern Regional CT Conference Minister. To complete the job listing, we sought input from the Board of Trustees on an appropriate and affordable compensation package. We met our goal of having the profile completed by the end of January.

The next phase will be reviewing the profiles we receive and determining candidates who we think might be a good choice for us. It will be exciting and may also be quite challenging. We continue to welcome your thoughts about the process, however, this phase of reviewing the profiles and selecting possible candidates to interview, will be strictly confidential and we ask you to respect the need for this to be so.

We are in the Lenten season now, a time when people often make a commitment to set aside a special time for reflection and prayer, to listen for God's voice in their life. This might also be a good time for all of us to think about change.

Change has begun for us at the First Congregational Church of Lebanon. Pastor Bob became our interim pastor last July. The role of an interim pastor is not to pick up the playbook of the previous pastor and play the game as that person did; it is not to simply do the Sunday sermons and officiate at other services as called upon. The job is also, and perhaps most importantly, to help us toward our call of a new pastor by introducing us to change. Unlike when a pastor is on vacation and we have someone 'fill in,' the job of the interim pastor is to show us what it will be like to 'do new things,' and maybe 'do things in a new way.'

It's only natural that we experience many emotions and thoughts when we contemplate having a new pastor. Some people are excited and optimistic; others are worried about what the changes will be; many of us have a combination of emotions; and it's likely some people don't want any change. But there is going to be a new person, a new settled pastor, and that alone will be a change. So, we should take some time to examine our feelings about this and ask ourselves what are we excited about? What do we look forward to, hope for? What are we anxious about? And we should also ask ourselves how these feelings affect our individual relationship with God? How do they affect who we want to be as people of God? And, with all of our church history behind us, what is important for our future?

In the 315 years of the First Congregational Church of Lebanon, there have been 27 pastors. We are searching with open minds and open hearts for our 28th pastor. In this Lenten time of contemplation and reflection, please think about how we can carry on the work of this church with our next pastor. Please keep us in your prayers.

Yours in faith,

The Pastoral Search Committee

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



New Address

Fay Morehouse
Coachman Square
21 Bradley Rd.
Woodbridge, CT 06525

Website Pictures

As we search for our new pastor, Teresa Bielecki has been doing a lot of work to keep our website updated for those ministers that are considering our church as their new home. Part of this process is to include pictures of our church family at work and worship. We do understand that some people do not like to have their picture posted on any website. If you would not like to have your picture or your child's picture on the church's website please contact Teresa (teresabielecki@yahoo.com) and she will take a picture to have on file that she can check pictures against before she posts any on the website.