



# April 2023 Circuit Rider

First Congregational Church of Lebanon

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“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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# *A Note from the Pastor*

Dear Friends,

During this season of Lent, we have been asking ourselves if we have been looking for love in the right places or if we have been giving our attention to things that do not really sustain our lives or add love to our days and to our world. We have thought about the times and ways we have turned to money, material possessions, relationships, compulsive behaviors, addictions and other things outside of ourselves for the sense of security and safety that we long for.

Our scripture stories of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness, Nicodemus curiosity, the Samaritan woman at the well, the blind man who received his sight, and the raising of Lazarus from the dead, all point us to the source of our true safety and security – our God who has already given us and continues to offer us every day the unconditional love and acceptance that we long for.

In our Scrabble game, we have learned that when we “Resist Evil,” “Help Others,” “Believe for Life,” “Care Like a Shepherd,” accept God’s “Liberating Love,” and “Expect the Unexpected,” “Love ALWAYS Wins”! The Paradox is that it takes God’s liberating love in order for us to resist evil, help others, have faith, care for others like a shepherd, and expect the unexpected, especially during dark and difficult times.

We are heading into Holy Week – a time that commemorates the last week in Jesus' life, and a very dark time in his disciples' lives. By Friday afternoon, they were in despair. They thought all was lost. Their dreams were crushed. Their friend and teacher had been killed. They didn't know where to turn. They were afraid. We all have difficult and perhaps despairing times in our own lives – times when we don't know where to turn; times when we're afraid.

We have the benefit of knowing that Easter morning happened, and that Jesus' disciples got to see their friend again. So it can be easy for us to sail through Holy Week, not paying much attention to the story of Jesus' arrest, crucifixion, death and time in the tomb. But I want you to think about those events, and to engage them through our Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services (at 7:00 PM on April 6th and 7th). Allow yourself to make the connections to the times in your life where you have experienced (or may now be experiencing) pain and hardship, and perhaps a sense of God's absence. Allow yourself to connect with Jesus' suffering, and to recognize that God has suffered the same ways you suffer, and that God knows every emotion and experience that you go through in your life.

And then, come be with us in worship on Easter morning at 10:00 on April 9th when we will rejoice that the stone has been rolled away, and the tomb is empty. Jesus lives again! Resurrection happens! And be reminded that God's love can and will conquer every difficulty, every hardship, every heartbreak, and even death itself in your life.

The story of Holy Week and Easter isn't just Jesus' story. It's OUR story!! Come celebrate God's LOVE and Jesus' RESURRECTION, and NEW LIFE for all of us this Easter!

With Thanks and Praise that Love ALWAYS Wins!

*Denise*

# Message from OUR CHURCH Moderator

As you all may or may not know, at a Special Church meeting on Sunday, March 19, 2023, the church approved the members presented to work as the Search Committee to find a Pastor for our church. The following are my notes for that meeting to give you an idea of how we got to the point of this Special meeting.

- **Where we came from:**
  - **A volunteer sub-committee was created from the Church Council to review the church membership list and select those we thought would be good candidates for the Search Committee.**
    - **That sub-committee was made up of:**
      - **Phil Ziel**
      - **Phil Johnson**
      - **Dawn Drum**
      - **Myself (Art Wallace)**
      - **And Rev. Terry as a consultant**
- **By the revised Bylaws, the committee is made up of 7 members.**
  - **It is a common practice to have 2 Alternates so that if one member needs to drop out an alternate would be able to fill-in.**
  - **The Alternate is to participate in the search as if a regular member, but with no vote.**
  - **So, we selected 9 members in total (7 regular members and 2 Alternates)**
- **Our criteria were to select those that were:**
  - **Willing to take on the task.**
  - **Be able to be at all the meetings (in person or on-line).**
  - **Did not have a personal agenda.**
  - **Would work well with the other members of the committee.**
  - **Be open-minded.**
- **After many meetings and discussions, we selected the team that we presented to the church at the March 19th meeting.**
  - **Our nominations for the Search Committee are:**
    - **Phil Ziel**
    - **Phil Johnson**
    - **David Stifel**
    - **Geri McCaw**
    - **Mary Horan**
    - **Sandy Belisle**
    - **Audra Holmes**
    - **Priscilla Clesowich (Alternate #1)**
    - **Amy Kirkpatrick Alternate #2)**

The next step is to contact Isaac Lawson of the UCC, informing him that we have selected a Search Committee. A meeting will be scheduled for him to meet with the Search Committee and give them some guidance and direction for their task ahead.

On April 23, 2023, the Search Committee will be properly commissioned during our regular church worship service.

I would personally like to thank all these members for taking on this tremendous task.

Be Active. Join in.

Art Wallace - Moderator



# News from the Board of Christian Outreach

Community Meal - Thank you to everyone who donated fruit and cookies for our March community meal. Our next meal at the First Baptist Church in Willimantic will be on May 31st.

No Freeze Zone - We delivered five very full boxes of items to the No Freeze Zone in Willimantic. Thank you to everyone who donated items. Homelessness isn't always a choice, but we can choose to help.

Equal Exchange Fairly Traded Products - Coffee, tea, baking items, and chocolate bars are available for purchase the first Sunday each month, following worship or by contacting the church office at 860-642-6179 or lebfirstcong@att.net. **WE HAVE A FEW NEW ITEMS, COME CHECK THEM OUT!!**

The board thanks you for your continuing support in our mission projects!

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**Bible Study**  
**Wednesday Mornings**  
**9:30 a.m.**  
**Memorial Room**  
**Everyone is welcome!**



**Spring Cleanup**  
**Saturday, April 15th ~ 9:00 a.m.**

The Trustees are seeking all able-bodied members and friends to help with the spring cleanup of church grounds and building. Please bring rakes, clippers, etc., for outside work or buckets, sponges and cleaning agents for inside work. Your contribution will be much appreciated.



**Friday Evenings**  
**5:00-7:00 p.m.**  
**Fellowship Hall**

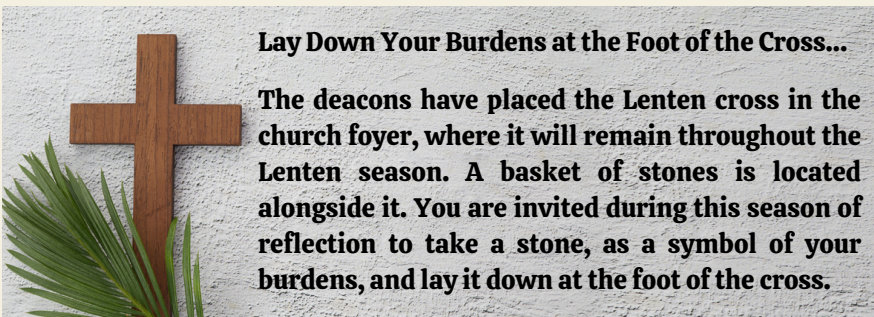
**March 31st**  
**Vegetable Soup**  
**Stuffed Pepper Soup**

**April 7th**  
**Thai Coconut Peanut Sweet Potato**  
**Chowder**



**EASTER**  
**BELL CHOIR**

REHEARSALS  
MARCH 27 & APRIL 3  
8PM



**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.

April Birthdays

3rd ~ Karen Fuller

4th ~ Jesse Soileau

5th ~ Tim Fields

10th ~ Ed Endsley

11th ~ Izabella Garceau

12th ~ Danielle Boisvert

21st ~ Marilu Randall

29th ~ Amy Hopkins

29th ~ Peggy McCarthy

*Happy Birthday!*

## Lenten & Easter Schedule

*Board of Deacon's Palm Sunday Breakfast  
April 2nd ~ 8:30 am*

*Palm Sunday Service - April 2nd ~ 10:00 am*

*Maundy Thursday Service - April 6th ~ 7:00 pm*

*Good Friday Service - April 7th ~ 7:00 pm*

*Sunrise Service & Breakfast - April 9th ~ 6:30 am  
Lebanon Baptist Church*

*Easter Service - April 9th ~ 10:00 am*

**On Sunday, April 2nd, the Deacons will be serving their annual Pancake Breakfast from 8:30-9:30 a.m. We hope you will plan to attend this special time together and enjoy a wonderful breakfast!**



**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.**



# A Note from Inspired by South Africa

**ISA has been invited to attend the  
Southern New England UCC Conference  
Annual Meeting in June,  
so we need to increase our inventory!**

**Please join us on April 15th at 10:00!  
No experience is needed, just the desire to gather with others to create  
some unique jewelry, while enjoying some fellowship time and laughs.**

## Easter Egg Hunt ~ April 9th

The Board of Christian Education will be hosting their annual Easter egg hunt. All children are invited to meet at the back of the Fellowship Hall following worship. Bags will be provided.



## Memorial Bench

Our church, along with the Gilead Congregational Church, are arranging to place an engraved stone bench honoring Pastor Sharon under the dogwood tree outside of the Fellowship Hall entrance. This dogwood tree held a special place is Sharon's heart during her time here as pastor. Both churches thought a bench would be a wonderful way in which to honor Pastor Sharon. If you would like to contribute, donations may be made out to the church with "Sharon's Bench" written in the memo line.

