



# March 2024 Circuit Rider

First Congregational Church of Lebanon

588 Exeter Road ~ P.O. Box 125

Lebanon, CT 06249

[www.lebanonfirstcong.org](http://www.lebanonfirstcong.org)

“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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## Church Office Hours

Tuesday ~ 1:00-5:00 p.m.

Wednesday-Friday ~ 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

# *A Note from the Pastor*

Dear Friends,

I must confess that it seems somewhat odd, in the middle of February, and after just the first Sunday in Lent, that before you read the next Circuit Rider, we will have already experienced the darkness of Holy Week and the joyful celebration of Easter. It seems, this year, the season of Lent will speed by in no time.

I am praying that you each will take some time during this season to contemplate our theme “what r u up to?” And even more, I’m praying you’ll be energized by thinking about what God is UP to in your own life, in our church, in our community, and in our world. There is SO MUCH that God is doing, and so many ways that you are participating in that important work, without perhaps even being aware of it.

Your participation in Sunday worship inspires and uplifts those around you, in ways you might not even imagine. Your consistent presence is a witness to God’s goodness and faithfulness, beyond that of even your own. Every time you smile at someone across the sanctuary, or the Fellowship Hall, you lighten the burdens of another. Every time you sing out praise and thanksgiving, you remind others of the truth of God’s love and providence, which will never let them down. Every time you laugh, you lighten the mood of someone around you, who may be carrying heavy burdens. And every time you raise up a prayer request, you remind us that this family of faith truly cares, and you inspire each of us to be grateful for all the blessings we enjoy, and to show that gratitude in outpourings of generosity.

When you participate in any of the outreach and mission efforts of our church, by helping prepare the meal of Friday night Soup and Bread, or by making sandwiches for the folks in need in Willimantic, or by attending an event to learn more about our neighbors, and ways we might invite them into our family, or by attending a brainstorming meeting to discuss creative ways to enhance our financial well-being, while providing opportunities for our neighbors to be involved in our ministries, you live out God’s call to truly BE the Church, and to share God’s message of love, grace and care, and you lay another stone in the path to our church’s future as a beacon in this community.

Every time you call someone you haven’t seen in church for a week or two, or visit someone who is lonely, or attend a Board or Committee meeting, or teach our children in Sunday School, or support the work of Inspired by South Africa, or contribute your time and energy to making the Strawberry Festival, or Summer Dance Fest, or the Harvest Fair, or the Hamburger Booth, or any of our many ministries successful, you are making our church visible as an important resource in our community, and you invite others to share in what we have found here.

Surely God is up to even more than all of this, and I’m excited for your future – each of your futures, and your shared future as a family of faith.

Perhaps the most impactful thing and exciting thing God is doing right now, is stirring in the heart and mind of your next Pastor and calling them already to embrace a new opportunity in ministry here, and to call Lebanon their home. I invite you to be in prayer with me for that Pastor, and for our Search Committee members, as they are about the vital, and sometimes challenging work of discernment about “what God is UP to” in preparing for the next chapter of your continuing and unfolding story, as we each and all approach the wonderful gift of new life at Easter.

May your hearts and spirits be buoyed by God’s love and faithfulness!

Pastor Denise

# Message from OUR CHURCH Moderator

Today is February 14th, Valentine's Day. I wish everyone a Happy Valentine's Day as I ponder what to write about in this March message.

We had a very successful Annual Meeting on February 4th, and I am looking forward to the upcoming year. I mentioned the following in the last Circuit Rider, but I think it is worthwhile reiterating it.

The Search Committee has been busy reviewing candidate profiles and has actually had some 1st and 2nd interviews with a few candidates. This is very promising. With God's help we may have some good news very soon.

As it was pointed out at the annual meeting, the budget for 2024 is very ambitious and we need to work hard to meet that goal. I have a meeting scheduled for February 18th requesting help for a short-lived ad-hoc committee to find alternative ways to raise funds to support our budget. This committee is not designed to do the fundraising but to discuss new ideas, to determine what will work and what won't. I'll need a lot of help, so if you have any ideas, and if you are interested in working with the committee, email me at [wallaceajw@gmail.com](mailto:wallaceajw@gmail.com). Even if you could not attend the meeting but would like to help let me know.

Denise has scheduled another discussion on MissionInSite (February 25th). This is a way of knowing who our neighbors are and what's their needs. I'm hoping the turnout will be better than the last.

As we think about a new Pastor, and the Budget, we need to remember the "Goals for the Designated-Term Pastor and Congregation Policy" that we all agreed to at a special meeting in January. We have a lot of good, dedicated people who work hard on boards and committees all year long. This is not their responsibility. This is the members of the First Congregational Church of Lebanon's responsibility. This is not the Boards and Committees church, nor my church, nor your church. This is "Our Church", and all members need to step up and do their part.

"Be Active, Join In!"

Art Wallace - Moderator



# News from the Board of Christian Outreach

Through our congregation's generosity, we were able to deliver another three boxes of items to the No Freeze Zone in Willimantic. That's at least six boxes of items. Thank you so very much. We will continue to collect goods through March.

On January 31st, we prepared forty-eight bag meals for the Windham Community Meal that provides meals for the needy and homeless. The bags went together quickly with many hands helping, including some of the incoming members. A bag meal consists of a sandwich (ham or turkey, cheese, lettuce & tomato), fruit, granola bar, chips and a cookie or brownie. We're glad we can provide all of this to those less fortunate than us,

## Fair Trade Products

### Coffee ~ \$8.00

Colombian  
Mind, Body & Soul  
Breakfast Blend

### Coffee ~ \$9.00

Sister's Blend

### Hot Cocoa ~ \$6.00

### Single Serve Pods ~ \$7.00

Unwind Decaf  
Breakfast Blend

### Decaf Coffee ~ \$9.00

Organic Decaf  
Hazelnut Decaf

### Tea ~ \$4.00

Ginger Tea

Hibiscus Tea

Chamomile Tea

Black Tea with Ginger

Turmeric Ginger

Peppermint

## Food & Baking Items

Baking Cocoa ~ \$6.00

Roasted Salted Cashews ~ \$6.00

Semi-Sweet Chocolate Chips ~ \$4.00

Natural Cashews ~ \$6.00

Almonds ~ \$6.00

## Milk Chocolate & Dark Chocolate Bars ~ \$3.00

Dark Chocolate with Almond & Sea Salt

Milk Caramel Crunch with Sea Salt

Dark Chocolate Lemon Ginger with Black Pepper

## Outstanding Junior & Senior Steward Awards

Recognizing members of our church family for their efforts and sacrifices, while caring for the livelihood and survival of the First Congregational Church of Lebanon and its mission.

## Congratulations to our 2023 Stewards

Junior ~ Baily Madore

Senior ~ Greg Hopkins





Happy  
Birthday

## March Birthdays

1st ~ Evan Dias

5th ~ Jim Randall

12th ~ Josh Soileau

19th ~ Liam O'Hearn

26th ~ Teresa Bielecki

28th ~ Ellen Bauwens

29th ~ Ginger McGuire

29th ~ Bev York

29th ~ Hudson Holmes

30th ~ Ethan Magnuson

30th ~ Chandler Magnuson

31st ~ Hailey Tompkins

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!



Instead of bemoaning what we can't do, or used to do, in a culture where "measuring up" to external standards seems impossible, this Lent we will celebrate the small things that we can do right now to respond to God's call in our place, for our time.



### 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.



## 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.



### Palm Sunday Pancake Breakfast

On Sunday, March 24th, 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!





# Easter Week Schedule

Board of Deacon's Palm Sunday Breakfast  
March 24th ~ 8:30-9:30 am

Palm Sunday Service - March 24th ~ 10:00 am



Maundy Thursday Service - March 28th ~ 7:00 pm

Good Friday Service - March 29th ~ 7:00 pm

Sunrise Service & Breakfast - March 31st ~  
6:30 am Lebanon Congregational Church

Easter Service - March 31st ~ 10:00 am

Join us for a Contemporary Worship Experience, with a delicious dinner of Soup and Bread to follow, in Fellowship Hall on Sunday, March 10th beginning at 5:00 PM!

As we journey together through the last dark weeks of winter, and Lent, our theme for this unique service will be "Holding On to the Light". This promises to be a very meaningful and uplifting worship experience, you won't want to miss! Feel free to invite your friends to join us!!

## Holiday Fair

We had our first meeting in February and had a great turnout! There were a lot of great suggestions presented on how to change up and revamp our Holiday Fair. As we continue to meet and work on implementing some of these suggestions, we will also be creating new items for the Country Store and Round Robin Crafters. We plan to meet on the first Saturday of each month at 9:00. We hope you will join us on March 2nd as we decoupage, or just join us for some fellowship!

We are looking for donations of pretty, decorative paper napkins (flowers, birds, pretty patterns, etc.). If you have a few extra and would like to donate them, there is a box in the foyer for donations. Thank you!

"If any want to become my followers,  
let them deny themselves and  
take up their cross and follow me."

— Mark 8: 31-38







## **Friday Night Soup & Bread 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.**

Each week enjoy two different homemade soups (one with meat and one without), bread, cookie, and beverage. Eat in or takeout. All are welcome, this event is free but donations are accepted. Join us!!

### **March 1st**

**Tomato Soup (non-meat) or Beef Yakamein**

**(Beef Yakamein is a slow-cooked beef and Creole spiced broth served with noodles.)**

### **March 8th**

**Caramelized Onion Minestrone (non-meat) or Layered Fish Chowder**

### **March 15th**

**No Soup & Bread**

**Lyman Baseball Pasta Dinner ~ 5:00 p.m.**

### **March 22nd**

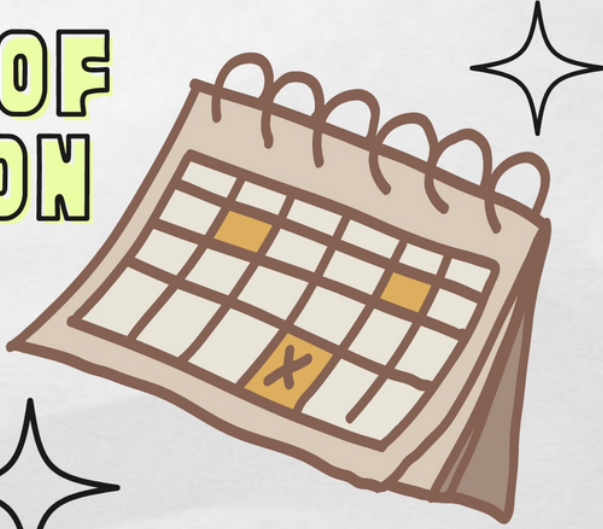
**Hearty Potato (non-meat) or Mulligatawny**

### **March 29th**

**Good Friday - no soup and bread**



# FROM THE DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION & FAITH FORMATION



## ONE BIG LOVE

Lent is upon us and we are celebrating God's great, great love! Over and over, we see the love of God - in the Bible, in our family, in the world around us. This year, the children will focus on the importance of finding, experiencing, and sharing God's Great Love!



## 40 DAYS CHALLENGE

Instead of giving up, we're giving AWAY! And we are challenging you to do the same. The children, along with their families, are each giving away 40 items from their belongings to donate to other children and families in need - toys, clothes, books, and more! Are you ready to take on the challenge? Imagine how our LOVE will spread! If the kids can do it, you can do it!

