



December 2024 Circuit Rider

First Congregational Church of Lebanon
588 Exeter Road ~ P.O. Box 125
Lebanon, CT 06249
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 Rev. Amie

Advent, the most joyful time of year, brings the promise of new beginnings and hope. In recent weeks, I've heard many people mention decorating their homes for Christmas before Thanksgiving. They share a common reason: the symbols of Advent offer a much-needed beacon of hope in our world today. This Advent season, we'll explore what it means to rediscover a hope-filled faith through the beloved story by Dr. Seuss, "The Grinch that Stole Christmas." Using the-all church curriculum "The Heart That Grew Three Sizes: Finding Faith in the Story of the Grinch" by Matt Rawle.

In our Advent worship series and Bible study, we will explore what role God plays in our culture—in our day-to-day lives and in the work of our hands that produce music, art, literature, plays, movies, and technology. We'll use this beloved Christmas classic to help us understand the redemption and salvation offered to us in Christ, and how the birth of God's son brings peace, hope, love, and joy. Whether we identify with the Grinch, sympathize with him, or feel aversion to his character, we can learn from his journey as he comes to understand that Christmas is more than what he thought.

In our longing to rediscover hope, may this Advent season be our grounding for the faith filled hope that will carry us through the year ahead.

Advent Worship

Sunday December 1: Hope

Scripture: Amos 5:22, 23 & 24; Matthew 2:6; Romans 12:9

Sermon Title: "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year?"

Theme: This week we are invited to wrestle with what happens when life doesn't meet our expectations especially around something as important as Christmas.

Sunday December 8th: Peace

Scripture: Isaiah 60:3-6; Matthew 3:7-12

Sermon Title: "Looking the Part"

Theme: This week we are invited to consider the authenticity of Christmas Celebrations.

What does it mean to celebrate Christmas? What looks like Christmas but isn't, and conversely what doesn't look like Christmas but does tell the Nativity story?

Sunday December 15th: Love

Scripture: Matthew 2:11; Luke 1:26-38

Sermon Title: "When You're Sure You're Right"

Theme: This week we will explore how the Christmas story reveals just how vulnerable God's love for us is.

Sunday December 22nd: Joy

Scripture: Luke 2:8-20

Sermon Title: "The Heart That Grew Three Sizes"

Theme: This week we will be invited to experience and feel Joy.

Bible Study (9:30 a.m. in the Memorial Room or 7:00 p.m. on Zoom)

*November 24th: When Everything Is Wrong: We will familiarize ourselves with how the Grinch stole Christmas; explore what it means to have hope as we wait; learn how it's important to remember well; consider how we deal with unmet expectations and the impact that has on our faith. And be reminded that Christ came in a mission of Peace.

*December 3rd: When Christmas Isn't Christmas: We will evaluate our faith family's Christmas traditions, and the importance placed on them; explore what it means to experience the peace of Christ; consider how God redeems everything and calls us to participate in that redemption and begin to see Advent as a season of mystery and wonder.

*December 10th: When Light Shines: We will explore what it means to experience the peace of Christ. As well as consider how God redeems everything and calls us to participate in that redemption.

*December 17th: When Joy Is Our Song: We will explore the songs of lament and praise that can bring us closer to God; walk through the story of Christ's Birth as written in the Gospel of Luke to gain more knowledge and understanding; and consider how reconciliation is at the heart of the Christmas story.

Amen and Peace,
Rev. Amie

Message from OUR CHURCH Moderator

"Our Church" is made up of many people with diverse capabilities. If only we had a way to harness these capabilities to make us a stronger and better place. As it turns out, the Nominating Committee, of "Our Church", is in the process of filling in vacancies on boards and committees for the 2025 slate of officers. This would be a great time for you to evaluate your unique capabilities and to help the Nominating Committee to fill in positions that you may be able to fill. Look at the list of boards and committees listed in the church bylaws to see if there is a place for you.

If you do not have a copy of the bylaws, contact the church office for a copy. Or you can pick up a copy in the Fellowship Hall foyer.

The list of Boards is:

- Deacons
- Trustees
- Christian Education
- Christian Outreach

The list of Committees is:

- Archive Preservation
- Flower
- Music
- Stewardship

There are also spots open as Delegates to the New London Association and the Southern New England Conference.

If any of these boards or committees are of interest to you, contact the Nominating Committee Chairperson, Geri McCaw, or a member of the board or committee to see how you can help.

Lastly, the church is always looking for volunteers to help in any capacity.

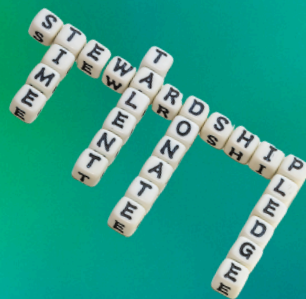
See you in church.

Art Wallace – Moderator

"Be Active, Join In!"

Nominations for Senior and Junior Steward

Special forms for nominations are available at the back of the sanctuary, on our website, or by contacting the church office. Forms may be dropped in the box located in the church foyer or mailed to the church (please put Attn: Stewardship Comm. on envelope). Nominations will close on January 12, 2025.



What is the Outstanding Stewardship Award?

Each year the congregation is asked to nominate an Outstanding Junior and Senior Steward. At the Annual Meeting the awards are presented. Consideration is given to how SIGNIFICANTLY they have helped our church, its family members, and missions. You are asked to give examples of the qualities, efforts, and dedication they have shown in the mission and life of our Church.

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.

December Birthdays

3rd ~ Al Manning
8th ~ Amy Kirkpatrick
11th ~ Michelle Kersey
14th ~ Teddy Randall
28th ~ Ellen Meseroll
30th ~ Emma Meleo



Granite Post and Chain Fence Line to be Installed Along Edge of Library Driveway

The Trustees will be installing a granite post and chain fence line approximately 110 feet long along the rear driveway to the Town Library for the purpose of preventing cars from parking on the church lawn. The plan for the granite post fence line was submitted to the First Selectman and Zoning Board and was approved October 21, 2024. Frequent parking on the lawn was damaging the new grass seeding and threatening the root structure of the oak, a descendent of the original Connecticut Charter Oak. As a temporary measure to protect this area, the Trustees installed steel posts with rope along the edge of the driveway, an unattractive but functional measure until a more suitable and permanent solution could be implemented. Following an investigation of alternatives, the Trustees decided to proceed with an attractive and architecturally fitting granite post fence line alternate. The granite posts will be spaced at approximately 12 feet on-center and placed along the driveway curve approximately 2-1/2 feet offset from the edge of the driveway pavement. Black landscape chain will be draped between the posts, attached to post hitching rings. Two openings, four feet wide, along the fence line will also be provided for walk-through access. The Trustees will be installing the granite post fence line in early December using a rental skid steer loader with auger, assisted with Jim McCaw and his front-end loader tractor to place the posts. The project cost will be approximately \$6500. Please feel free to contact any of the Trustees should you have any questions about the project.

Tim Fields, Trustees Chairman

Quilt Drawing

The Round Robin Crafters have been busy sewing two quilts. Both quilts are on display in the Fellowship Hall. Tickets are three for \$5 and may be purchased either from a member of the Round Robin Crafters (Sandy Rose, Dawn Drum or Michelle Kersey) or at the Winter Market on December 7th. Drawing will be held on Sunday, December 8th, following the worship service. You do not need to be present to win.





Winter Market

*First Congregational Church of Lebanon
588 Exeter Rd., Lebanon
Saturday, December 7, 2024
9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.*



PASTOR AMIE IS
EXCITED TO



connect with you!

Call, Text, or Email!

ANYTIME TO ARRANGE A MEETING



EMAIL:
PASTORLEBFIRSTCONG@GMAIL.COM
CALL OR TEXT:
508-272-6437



Imagine, Imagine. Imagine a world without hunger and where everyone is able to be warm. What a wonderful world that would be. By contributing to the No Freeze Zone, the Community Meal in Willimantic, Heifer Project, and Walk for Warmth, our church family has been able to help with this. Your generosity to these causes has helped to alleviate the need in our area and beyond. Thank You!

As in past years, Lebanon Social Services will be providing holiday gifts for children whose family may be experiencing difficult times. As our church has done in the past, we offered to assist with this. This year we received gift wishes for three children for a total of fifteen gifts. A tree with tags for those gifts was placed in the sanctuary on November 17th and by the end of the morning, all the tags had been taken! These children will certainly have a bright holiday. (All gifts should be unwrapped and brought to the church by December 1st or to Lebanon Social Services by December 3rd.)

We will continue to gather items for the No Freeze Zone. A box is in the foyer for your donations. A list of needed items follows.

Winter Needs

- | | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Disinfectant Wipes | Disinfectant Spray | Hand Soap | Lotion |
| 55 Gallon Trash Bags | Tissues | Paper Towels | Soap |
| Toilet Paper | Deodorant | Shampoo | Conditioner |
| Razors | First Aid Supplies | Nail Clippers | |
| Tweezers | Combs & Brushes | | |



Clothing (men's & women's, med-xxl)

- | | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------|------------|---------------------|-----------|
| Hand/Foot Warmers | Sweatshirts | T-Shirts | Thermals | Underwear |
| Waterproof Gloves | Rain Ponchos | Sweatpants | Ear Buds/Headphones | |

Another big thank you for your generosity.

Deacon's Fund Offering

There will be another Deacon's Fund offering on January 26, 2025. Our fund was depleted last winter when we had two extensive needs that arose. The Deacon's Fund was established to be used, at the discretion of the Minister, to meet the needs of people who come to our church for financial help during dire times. We had an offering in October, and although people were generous, we are looking to increase the fund for 2025. Thank you in advance for your understanding. ~The Deacons



Special Christmas Services

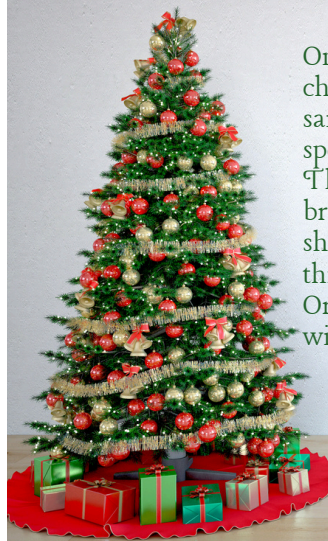
First Congregational Church of Lebanon
588 Exeter Road, Lebanon, Connecticut

Service of Remembrance
Sunday, December 8, 2024 - 3:00 p.m.

Christmas Eve Service with Lessons & Carols
Tuesday, December 24, 2024 - 7:00 p.m.

Candlelight Christmas Eve Service
Tuesday, December 24, 2024 - 11:30 p.m.

www.lebanonfirstcong.org



Christmas Tree Decorating

On Sunday, December 8th, 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.

WAIM Workday

Saturday, December 21st is our day at WAIM! As you know, our faith community is one of 39 faith communities belonging to the Windham Area Interfaith Ministry. As a member, we commit to help WAIM by sending a group of volunteers twice a year on a Saturday morning and assist the organization monetarily. Please invite your friends and family to come with you. It's much more fun with a group. Our commitment is to help from 9 AM to noon.

Service of Remembrance

December 8th ~ 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 Rev. Amie will light those candles and mention their names.



Epiphany Sunday ~ January 5th

Sunday, January 5th, 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 5th. There will be a star for you!



FROM THE PASTORAL TRANSITION TEAM

Can you believe it?!?! Rev. Amie has been with us for almost 3 months now!! Boy has time flown by. In that time, Rev. Amie has been asking a lot of questions, which is a good thing. This is how she will grow with us and be successful in her job.

So, as we enter this Advent season, it is good to remember that many of our beloved church traditions may not be familiar to those who are new - including Rev Amie. As a Transition Team, our role is to support our minister as she comes to know the church family and begin to focus on the goals our church voted on and accepted in Spring 2024 (see below). We invite patience and understanding while welcoming your questions or thoughts. This is a journey of mutual welcome and cooperation, and like the Advent season, one we highly anticipate!

The goals we agreed on are below:

DTP GOALS GRID

	Goal: with specificity, describe what you hope to accomplish during this time.	Commitment: describe how the congregation will prioritize and participate in reaching this goal?	Assessment: describe how the congregation will know the goal has been accomplished
1.	Church Growth a) Develop a research team to explore vital churches b) Increase knowledge of the Mission Insite tool c) Plan new youth activities d) Revitalize the outreach program to the community and new residents e) Enhance events, activities and mission opportunities	(a-e) In collaboration with Congregation, the DTP will develop groups to address the itemized tasks and develop plans for successful completion	Year 1: Teams have been formed and met Year 2-4: Monthly updates on progress of team plan and actions (including activities, visitations, and events)

2.	<p>Spiritual and Leadership Development of the Laity</p> <p>Develop and implement a consistent program for nurturing the spiritual development of new members/participants</p>	<p>In collaboration with Deacons, the DTP will develop and implement programs as identified</p>	<p>Year 1-2: Create and hold annual programs for new and any members to attend. Develop structure/content to include introduction to congregationalism: history and polity, intro to UCC, ministries of the church.</p> <p>Year 1-4: Hold quarterly study groups for spiritual exploration at various times and days to broaden reach of program. Guide expansion to include various members as study guide facilitators.</p> <p>Year 1-3: Explore and establish worship teams for formulating specific services throughout liturgical year (includes re-vitalizing contemporary worship)</p> <p>Year 2-4: Whether at church or other locations, provide worship workshops for congregational members related to previous goal developing worship teams</p>
3.	<p>Address financial needs of the church for the future</p>	<p>The DTP will collaborate with the Stewardship Committee and the Board of Trustees</p>	<p>Year 1: Propose 2-3 new fundraising opportunities</p> <p>Year 2: Explore 2-3 grant funding options to support church ministries</p> <p>Year 3: Explore opportunities to increase paid rental of church facilities</p> <p>Year 1-4: Develop a pledge focused program with goal to increase pledge units by a minimum of 10% by end of Year 3</p>

	Planned Giving Program		Year 3-4: Develop and present a planned giving program including estate planning and charitable giving
4.	Develop relationships with pastors and congregations of UCC churches in neighboring towns Explore sharing resources with UCC churches in neighboring towns to benefit and enhance the ministries of each of the churches by optimizing the use of best gifts	In collaboration with Council, Deacons and other pastors, the DTP and congregations of neighboring UCC churches	Year 1: Explore possible churches and make contact Year 2: Engage in at least one event with another church (may include pulpit swap, social event, mission/service opportunity) Year 3-4: Explore feasibility of shared resources

So, as we enter into Advent, may we be gracious, loving, understanding and supportive; welcoming this season of Light.

Blessings from your Pastoral Transition Team

(Phil Johnson, Phil Ziel, Rev. Mary Horan, Audra Holmes, Sandy Belisle, Geri McCaw, Dave Stifel, Priscilla Clesowich and Amy Kirkpatrick)

Christmas Poinsettias

This year the Flower Committee would like to offer Christmas poinsettias to the congregation to purchase in memory of or in honor of a loved one(s). They will be displayed on Sunday, December 22, 2024.

I wish to order _____ 6" pot poinsettia for \$7 each.

RED ONLY

Donor: _____

For the bulletin insert:

The plant is given In Loving Memory Of: _____

Or In Honor Of: _____

To be picked up after the service on Sunday, December 22, 2024.

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 Wednesday, December 15th.

Contact Sandy Belisle, Dawn Drum, Marge Page or Linda Heatherly with any questions.