

Steeple Talk

First Congregational Church of Littleton

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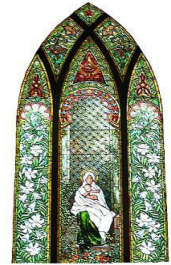
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December 2009

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Pastor's Message



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Upcoming Events

- ◆ Dec. 1st -4:00 PM We host Dinner Bell
- ◆ Dec. 6th. 11:15 am. Advent Time Luncheon and Crafts.
- ◆ Dec. 12th 8:00 AM - Men's Group at Nielson's
- ◆ Dec. 11th - 7:00 PM Ballroom Dancing in Fellowship Hall begins
- ◆ Dec. 19th- 9:00 AM Pageant rehearsal, Christmas baskets and caroling
- ◆ Dec. 20th 10:00 AM Christmas Pageant during church
- ◆ Dec. 24th - 7:00 PM Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Advent is a combination of past, present and future; much like Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* but without the spooky ghosts. We see our progress, like Scrooge, from hopelessness to promise and joy. As we move this month through the season of Advent we remember that gift given by God that grows, takes form, becomes the pivotal point in history and then informs and changes our future.

Like most pastors, I am ambivalent about this season. I find joy in our hearts turning to the Christ but I am always disturbed as are many of you with the commercialism and the tawdry misuse of a beautiful time. I really hope and pray that you will find time to just relax and enjoy the deeper sense of the season, enjoy family and moments of reflection on this year past, and the new year to come. So Sonnie and I do wish you a very Merry Christmas and a blessed and happy New Year.

Advent traditionally has meant the introduction of the Christ, the Savior into the world and we all know and love the simple stories of the shepherds and wise men, the star and the stable. But Advent also has long had an underlying and parallel theme; not only the coming of the Christ Child, but also the second coming at the end of history. So Advent is a time of

preparation for the coming now and also the eternal future as well.

Here in First Congregational Church of Littleton, New Hampshire we are in a state of Advent on our own more humble terms. What is God bringing to pass among us? What new forms and what prayers and dreams will be fulfilled and when? As the new year dawns, the Search Committee will be praying and struggling to make the right decisions, God honoring decisions, that will help to bring hope and vitality to this place and people. That is a big order to put on someone who will be coming and is new and struggling themselves to perceive God's will and do their best to do it. You will soon be receiving a new shepherd, but remember what one friend of mine has said: shepherds don't beget sheep, sheep beget sheep. Don't be unrealistic in your expectations, but work together bringing the best of your talents, resources and efforts together with the best of the new leader's to seek God's plan and fulfill it.

As this present season is a time of preparation and joy, may the coming months be also a growing time of joyful preparation for the new season in the life of First Congregational Church. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Your friend and Interim Pastor,

Editor: Alice Muh (muhfamily@roadrunner.com)
Production Staff: Pat Whipple, Anna Jackman

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

December 2009

Office Hours: Mon - Fri. 8:30am - 12:30pm

Dr. Gene's office hours: Mon - Thurs 9:00 am - 2:00 pm

Music Director office hours: Weds: 4:30pm - 8:00 pm Sun. 9:00 am - 12:00 noon

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Gene vacation 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 4:00 PM-Dinner Bell - All Saints Church 7:00 PM-AI Anon	2 Gene vacation 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 12:00 PM-Store to Door 6:30 PM-Choir Rehearsal 8:00 PM-AA Weds. Night Big Book	3 Gene vacation 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 7:00 PM-Search Committee SLLC Christmas Wreaths delivered	4 Pastor's Sabbath Gene is back 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 7:00 PM-North Country Chorus Concert - Sanctuary	5 7:30 PM-AA - Fellowship
6 ADVENT SUNDAY- 2 09:00 AM Bible Study 09:15 AM-Choir Rehearsal 10:00 AM-Communion 10:00 AM-Worship/Sunday School 11:15 AM-Advent Family Fellowship Lunch/Crafts 4:00 PM-Ecum. Youth/Methodist	7 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 5:30 PM-Finance Meeting	8 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 06:30 PM-Deacons Meeting 7:00 PM-AI Anon	9 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 12:00 PM-Store to Door 01:30 PM-Ladies Society 6:00 PM-Christian Ed Meeting 6:30 PM-Choir Rehearsal 8:00 PM-AA Weds. Night Big Book	10 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 7:00 PM-Search Committee	11 Pastor's Sabbath 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 7:00 PM-9:00 PM Ballroom Dancing-Fellowship Hall	12 08:00 AM- Men's Breakfast Fellowship @ Lars Nielson's 7:30 PM-AA - Fellowship
13 ADVENT SUNDAY- 3 09:00 am Bible Study 09:15 AM-Choir Rehearsal 10:00 AM-Worship/Sunday School 11:15 AM-Coffee Fellowship 11:15 AM-Music Committee 11:15 AM-Property Committee 4:00 PM-Ecum. Youth/Methodist	14 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 5:30 PM-SLLC Board Meeting	15 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 7:00 PM-AI Anon 7:00 PM-Council Meeting	16 10:00 AM-Clergy 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 12:00 PM-Store to Door 6:30 PM-Choir Rehearsal 8:00 PM-AA Weds. Night Big Book	17 08:00 AM-Gene at Conference 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	18 Pastor's Sabbath 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 5:00 PM-Shining Lights Christmas Party 7:00 PM-9:00 PM Ballroom Dancing-Fellowship Hall	19 09:00 AM- 11:00 AM Christmas Pageant Rehearsal 12:00 – 3:00 PM Christmas Baskets and Caroling. 7:30 PM-AA – Fellowship
20 ADVENT SUNDAY- 4 09:00 AM Bible Study 09:15 AM-Choir Rehearsal 10:00 AM-Worship/ with Christmas Pageant 11:15 AM-Coffee Fellowship 4:00 PM-Ecum. Youth/Methodist	21 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall STEEPLE TALK DEADLINE	22 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 07:00 PM-AI Anon	23 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 12:00 PM-Store to Door 6:30 PM-Choir Rehearsal 8:00 PM-AA Weds. Night Big Book	24 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 7:00 PM-CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE	25 CHRISTMAS DAY OFFICE CLOSED PASTOR SABBATH 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	26 7:30 PM-AA - Fellowship
27 09:00 AM Bible Study 10:00 AM-Worship/Sunday School 10:00 AM-Food Collection 11:15 AM-Coffee Fellowship	28 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	29 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 7:00 PM-AI Anon	30 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 12:00 PM-Store to Door 8:00 PM-AA Weds. Night Big Book	31 NEW YEARS EVE 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	 <i>Wesołych Świąt Bożego Narodzenia</i>	<i>Rejoice</i>

**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,
and we have seen his glory,
glory as of the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.
John 1:14**

Ladies Society Celebration

160th Birthday Celebration

Thanks to all who made our celebration on November 15 a success. Carolyn Kinne Grass from Lebanon and Beverley Blasanak Slocum from Burlington attended in honor of their mothers who were long time members of the organization. Thanks especially go to Roger Petit, head deacon, kitchen helpers, and other deacons who helped with the plans. Special thanks to Dr. Gene Mockabee for writing the proclamation which was read during the church service. A special proclamation came from the NH UCC office, Dr. Schulte and Reverend Slater as authors. It was a special day for the members of the longest, continuously operating organization in the town of Littleton.

Great News: We welcome two new members: Jean Kimball and Hilda Little. Hilda plans to join our church soon.

RADA SALES success

Thanks to all of you who purchased the famous Rada Cutlery during our sales event. We appreciate your business the profits of which will help with our community projects. You are great salespeople!

Contributed by Barbara Holland



Ladies Society



Barbara Holland & Dr. Gene



Virginia Miller



Dorothy Sundman & Dorothea Ruggles



Mystery Photo: Can you guess who these lovely ladies are?

Answer on page 7 →



THINK GREEN

Did you know that 40% of all American trash is paper? Make an effort to recycle bottles, cans, and paper.

ASU/College of Sustainability

DANCE ~ DANCE ~DANCE







If you love to dance or want to learn, please join us in the fellowship hall on Friday nights from 7 - 9 starting December 11th.

We'll be playing a variety of music so you can practice your favorite steps and/or we'll be available to help you to get started in fox-trot, waltz, swing, cha-cha, etc. Please bring an extra pair of shoes to dance in so we can keep our new floor clean.

We'll all chip in \$5.00/couple to help to defray the expenses for the church. Let's spread the word and have some fun.

You can call Marti Faulkner for more information.

“Classifieds and Notices”

 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Pray without ceasing</i></p> <p>Our prayer concerns and celebrations are listed in the Sunday bulletin each week and are also posted on our website at www.1stconglittleton.org</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CALENDARS FOR SALE</p> <p>The Music Committee is selling calendars for the 2010 year complete with weekly devotions. This is a fundraiser to obtain some new music. These make great Christmas gifts!</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Financial Report</u> YTD as of October 25th, 2009</p> <p><i>Member support:</i> \$108,208.31 <i>Transf. from Trust Funds:</i> \$16,893.40 <i>Income from Fund Raisers:</i> \$5969.57 <i>Total Income:</i> \$139,377.57 <i>Total Expenses:</i> \$133,569.39</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Net: \$5808.18</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">North Country Chorus - Christmas Concert</p> <p>Presenting: Magnificat - by J.S. Bach A Child's Christmas In Wales - based on memoirs by Welsh poet Dylan Thomas. (a new cantata, beautifully melodic.)</p> <p>Featuring your favorite soloists from the North Country Chorus</p> <p>DATE: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4 7:30 P.M. at the First Congregational Church of Littleton</p> <p>~Repeated Saturday, Wells River Congregational Church - 7:30 p.m. ~Repeated Sunday, Peacham Congregational Church - 3 p.m.</p> <p>COST \$10 ADULT, \$5 STUDENTS</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Christmas Craft Fair</p> <p style="text-align: center;">First United Methodist Church, Littleton</p> <p style="text-align: center;">December 5th 9:00 am to 3:00 PM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Great ideas for Christmas presents</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Lunch available</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Baked Goods Table</p>	 <p>The next Dinner Bell that we host is December 1st at 4:30 pm at the All Saints Church.</p> <p>Please sign up NOW to bring a casserole, side dish, rolls or dessert.</p> <p>Your help is also needed to help set up, serve, or clean up. Call Lars Nielson at 444-1339 for more information or to volunteer.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">The Advent Wreath</p> <p>Four weeks before Christmas, Reverend Johnson of Christ Lutheran was leading a children's service featuring an Advent Wreath. He had told them what the three purple candles represented, then asked, "Does anyone know what the pink one means?" No one answered.</p> <p>Finally little Sara's hand went up. "Are they expecting a girl?"</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Here I am, Lord!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The nominating committee is looking for a few committed members to help with the mission of the church.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Please say YES when asked to help!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Altar flowers</p> <p>If you want flowers placed on the altar in memory or in honor of someone, please contact Glenda Iles at 444-5336 to make those arrangements. It will be necessary for you to make arrangements to have them delivered to the person of your choice after the service. Sundays that have no one signed up will have beautiful silk flowers placed on the altar.</p> 

SEARCH COMMITTEE

Our search for a new pastor has reached a significant milestone. This week the council approved and I forwarded to the conference office in Pembroke, NH the paperwork needed to advertise our position. We now anticipate that our ad will be posted on the United Church of Christ Employment Opportunities website in December.

We anticipate beginning to receive candidate profiles in January. Prayers are welcome as we move forward with the search process.

Ann Craxton, Search Committee Chair



THE CHRISTMAS FUND

The Christmas Fund offering will take place on **December 20th** during the church service. The proceeds from *The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund* are used to provide gifts to clergy and lay employees in all stages of their lives and ministries to and through the UCC. The availability of these funds is critical to the ability of the Board for Ministerial Assistance to help ensure a sustainable quality of life for those who ultimately receive the gifts.

During 2009 the Pension Boards have received an average of 3 to 4 new requests for assistance, each week! Response to those requests is possible because of dollars given to the Christmas Fund. The gifts go directly to those who serve or have served the church, in their moments of critical need. Currently, nearly 1,500 families have received either a one-time grant or are receiving continued assistance through your gifts to the Christmas Fund Offering.

A 1953 publication stated that: "In 1902, a little money was collected and special Christmas gifts were sent to ten older ministers." The same article also reported that \$121,054 was received for the Christmas Fund in 1952.

A little more than 50 years later, in 2008 the Christmas Fund received \$1,600,000, a record, and almost 1,500 families were assisted. Our goal is to be able to provide at least \$1,650,000 in assistance from the 2009 appeal.

Your generous contributions on December 20th for *The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund* can and do make a difference in the lives of many.

Did you Know?

THE ADVENT WREATH:

Advent (from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "coming towards") is the four week season of preparation for Christmas. The First Sunday of Advent marks the beginning of the church calendar year. Advent and Christmas both focus on the past - the coming of Jesus as an infant born into poverty in Bethlehem, and the future- the coming of Christ in glory to fulfill God's loving purpose for humanity.

From ancient times, one way to celebrate Advent in the church and in the home is by lighting candles on the Advent Wreath. The wreath was widely used in Northern Europe long before Christianity as a symbol of life and hope. Made of evergreens, it symbolized the circle of the year that would turn from winter to spring, from shadows to light. During the Middle Ages, Christians adopted this symbol and reinterpreted its meaning. The lighted candles symbolized the light of Christ shining to dispel the darkness of sin, and the evergreens represented the new life that Christ brings to the world.

The candle colors are derived from the traditional liturgical colors of Advent and Christmas. Three purple, one rose, and the center is white- the Christ candle. The purple candles originally symbolized the prayer, penance, and preparatory sacrifices and goods works undertaken at this time. The rose color likely is derived from an old Catholic custom of wearing rose colored vestments on the third Sunday in Advent. Each candle is first lit on the appropriate Sunday of Advent, and then the candles may be lit each day as a part of the individual or family's daily prayers. For Advent family devotions, you may want to visit the following UCC web site: <http://i.ucc.org/Portals/0/adventwreath.pdf>



Stewardship Report and Annual Budget

The Stewardship Committee is pleased to report that as of the November 17th, 64 pledges have been received totaling \$116,149.00 for 2010. This is up \$15,000 from this time last year. Of these, 78% have increased their pledge with an average increase of 15%. There are still some folks out there who pledged last year and, if they give at the same rate, we can expect a pledge income of 133,000. This is wonderful news in these difficult economic times. We are extremely thankful for the generosity of our congregation. We depend heavily on these pledges as they make up roughly 80% of our income budget.

The budget, as seen below is the council's best estimate on what we need for income in order to meet our expenses. The expenses are determined by each committee's prayerful consideration of what they need to accomplish their goals so that we, as a body of Christ, may continue our mission. Expenses, as usual, continue to rise for example: The cost of insurance alone is up 15% and the search process has costs attached to it as well.

We need an additional \$15,000 in income to balance our budget and are asking **YOU**, the congregation, for help. The council is asking each of you to think and pray about who we are as a church, how we hope to serve God in this community, this country, and this world, and what you can do to help. There is such push back from the secular world around us; so many other demands on our time and money. However, with everyone pulling together, we can do great things.

Mission Statement of the First Congregational Church of Littleton

As followers of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, we are called to provide a loving invitation and welcome to all, to inspire and uplift through the worship of God, to reach out to heal and enrich lives through the Holy Spirit, and to nurture people of various stages of their spiritual growth.

Expense Budget	Budget 2008	Budget 2009	Budget 2010	Change from 2009
DEACONS	5,150	4,050	9,450	5,400
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION	5,400	4,500	4,500	0
MINISTRY OF MUSIC	2,500	2,400	2,400	0
PROPERTY	49,516	47,523	45,386	-2,137
STEWARDSHIP & FINANCE	1,100	800	1,245	445
PASTOR SALARY & BENEFITS	64,925	58,400	63,400	5,000
STAFF SALARY & BENEFITS	50,660	50,774	43,570	-7,204
MISSION & OUTREACH	15,750	13,000	13,000	0
TOTAL EXPENSE	195,001	181,447	182,951	1,504
Income Budget				
Total Pledges NEEDED	133,612	133,600	147,101	13,501
Loose Offerings	13,000	8,000	4,800	-3,200
Church School Offerings	200	35	50	15
Scheduled withdrawal from				
investments	21,000	21,000	21,000	0
Fund raisers	6,100	5,500	6,000	500
Use of facilities	3,000	3,065	4,000	935
TOTAL INCOME	176,912	171,200	182,951	11,751
INCOME MINUS EXPENSE	-18,089	-10,247	0	10,247



Christian Ed.

Season's greetings to all:

We invite you to come and join us for our annual Advent Fellowship immediately following worship on December 6th. This is the best time of year: sharing fellowship and preparing for the birth of Christ. The joy, anticipation, and hope for this wondrous Child has not changed as the centuries have gone by. It remains the same wondrous experience every year. And do we have some wondrous experiences for you!

Awesome crafts and food have been planned and ordered up so all you have to do is SHOW UP! That's right, you do not have to do anything but bring your smile and join us in the joy of preparing for the birth of our savior. We have more than 10 crafts planned from the very simple to the more complex, something for all ages and abilities; even the non-artistic among us. Please come and join the fun and fellowship in the preparation for the coming of our Christ.

Our Christmas pageant will be December 20th during worship service with Jesus birthday party immediately following in fellowship hall. We will have a rehearsal on Saturday, the 19th from 9:00 to 11:00 am. Immediately following the rehearsal we will help the deacons prepare Christmas baskets for our homebound members. Caroling and delivery are planned for noon. This is such a wonderful opportunity to give the gift of yourself to members who are unable to attend church. Please, come and sing with us!

The ecumenical youth group is small in numbers but big in heart. As their mission project, they have chosen two teens from the "Giving Tree" that assists families of New Hampshire National Guard soldiers who have been deployed. We invite you to join them in this effort by choosing a child of your own, or you can make a cash donation to help buy gifts for the two teens already chosen. You can send your donation to the church office in an envelope marked "ecumenical mission project".

Wishing you a very merry Christmas.
 Peace be with you,
 Cheryl Kerr Cindy Sparks
 Linda Warden
 Mary Hodgdon Su Schott

The Human Touch
 By Herbert Stewart Lewis

To greet the world in color bright
 Is sometimes hard to do;
 Depending on the way you feel
 And others do towards you.

Here are some colors
 All bottled up.
 They don't amount to much.
 The thing they lack
 Is the thing you have;
 It's called the human touch.

This poem was written by Dotto Ruggles' father who died when she and her twin brother were ten months old. Dotto says, "It says a lot in a few words and is meaningful to our family. Herbert was an active church member, a Littleton businessman, a tenor singer in the choir, and served in the New Hampshire legislature".



Herbert Stewart Lewis

⇒ ***Mystery Photo***
 This photo was taken in 1967 and is from Emma Merrill Guild Christmas Tea. From the left are Dorothea Ruggles, Virginia Miller, and Lillian Mathes

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STEEPLE TALK

DECEMBER 2009

Steeple Talk

A newsletter of the
First Congregational
Church of Littleton



Church Staff

Interim Pastor: Rev. Dr. M. Eugene Mockabee
Administrative Assistant: Pat Whipple
Organist & Music Director: Dottie Morton

Officers

Moderator: Phil Krill
Vice Moderator: Alice Muh
Treasurer: Mary Menzies
Assistant Treasurer: Marti Faulkner
Financial Secretary: Joyce Krill

Committee Chairs

Christian Ed.: Linda Warden & Cheryl Kerr
Clerk: Rachel Clark
Deacons: Roger Petit & Mark Blodgett
Finance: Marti Faulkner
Mission: Lars Nielson
Music: Karen Morneau
Personnel Relations: Judy Warden
Property Management: Arthur Hunt
Trustee of the trust funds: Dick Holland

Shining Lights Learning Center

Board Chairperson: Suzanne Schott

ADVENT FAMILY FELLOWSHIP: Crafts and Luncheon

Advent Family Fellowship



December 6th ~ after church
**JOIN US FOR LUNCH
AND
CRAFTS FOR ALL AGES**

Sponsored by the Christian Education Committee