



First Church in Jaffrey Weathervane

November-December 2022

Welcome to our new members:

John Raleigh, Kathy McCloy-Raleigh, Bob & Lucia Holland, Harold Davis, Joyce Petkovich, Peter Davis, Pat Harmon (see page 3)

Photo courtesy of Carol Hess

Stewardship Matters

As the year winds down, organizations and individuals look to the past and then look forward, assessing accomplishments and crafting plans for a better future. Churches are no different.

This past week members and friends received an e-mail and a letter asking them to invest in First Church's future. Stewardship means "to take care of," but it's a two-way street. We take care of the church through our investments of time and treasure; in return we gain a safe haven and a community.

Let's look back at 2022:

It began with a new pastor (3/4 time) and the determination to emerge safely from the pandemic.

- Reopened church spaces welcomed the Scouts of America, AA, Electric Earth Concerts, and Amos Fortune Forum receptions.
- Attendance has steadily risen at worship services.
- Community service went global with the church's leadership in gathering funds to help refugees in Ukraine.
- A successful 105th Fair and the 2nd annual Pie Sale enhanced support for local mission projects.
- Three "teaching" sessions led by the pastor explored stories of faith during Lent, the history of the UCC, and the Lord's Prayer. Enthusiastic attendees praised the wide-ranging discussions and asked for more.
- The longstanding dedication to preserving our buildings in the Historic District was evidenced in steeple repairs, painting inside and out at the parsonage, and Parish House improvements.

Can you imagine the incredible things we can do next year?

Please read the stewardship letter to see how you can invest in this future.



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Installation Ceremony on September 11 Celebrates History & Community

Rev. Steve G. Miller was formally installed as the 24th settled pastor of the First Church in Jaffrey at the Jaffrey Center Meetinghouse, where the first settled pastor – Rev. Laban Ainsworth – had led worship services beginning in 1782. Starting with a procession from the Brick Church to the Meetinghouse at 3 pm, the event featured speakers who welcomed Rev. Miller to the community, scripture readings, and meditations. A moment of silence commemorated the September 11, 2001 attacks and honored its victims.

Sam Greene, moderator of First Church (and a descendant of Laban Ainsworth) welcomed all to the installation and reviewed the year-long search that led to this day which he described as “the reaffirming of a covenant between our church and our minister, and our minister and our church, and between each other.”

Mark Tieger (town moderator) and Owen Houghton (representing the United Church of Jaffrey) offered a community welcome, followed by Stacy Kullgren of the Southwest Association of the NH Conference, UCC and Gordon Rankin from the NH Conference, UCC. The final greeting was delivered by Jill Tyler (Steve’s wife) on behalf of the UCC Congregational Church in Vermillion, SD where Steve was lead pastor for 26 years.

Readings, reflections, and music set the stage for the formal installation. Directed by First Church’s Minister of Music Gene Faxon, a special choir of 18 voices from First Church and the wider music community performed a Taizé chant, the anthem “Behold How Good,” and hymns. “Oh, to Embrace...” A reflection offered by Ilona Kwiecien began with “we are blessed to be able to have this wonderful celebration, a celebration acting as a bridge between the past and the future ... a known past with all its ups and downs ... and a future of hope, wrapped in not a little mystery!”

Mary Jo Marvin talked about the impact of COVID on the Search Process which she chaired and how its members used the nontraditional tools of Zoom and the internet to look for a pastor who was also searching for new beginnings, even during a

(Installation – cont'd)

pandemic. She asked the Southwest Association of the NH UCC Conference to close the circle by installing Steve Miller as pastor. Two speakers – Gordon Rankin and Bob Kyte (a former pastor at First Church) – “charged” both Steve Miller and the congregation to honor and fulfill their commitments to each other. The final hymn was appropriate, “Be Thou My Vision.”

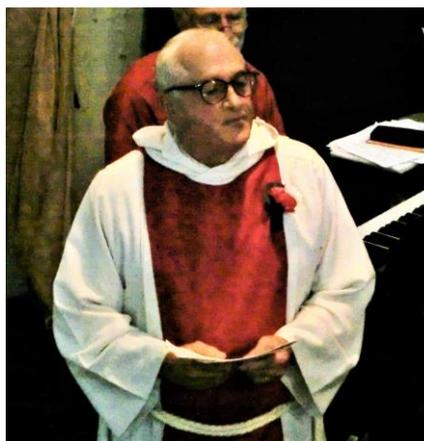
Following the installation, a reception in the Parish Hall flowed out to the lawn of First Church – clergy and community mingled and chatted, with the mountain and the Meetinghouse as fitting backdrops.



Ilona Kwiecien offering a reflection



The Installation



Rev. Steve Miller



Community Connections at First Church

The Membership Connection

On Reformation Sunday, October 30, 2022, nine new and associate members officially joined the First Church family. A short but heartfelt ceremony involved an invitation from Steve, pledges from incoming members and the congregation, and joy in affirming new personal covenants with First Church. New members received flowers and a certificate to celebrate the occasion (see page 1 photo).

If you are interested in future membership in any category or have questions about the process, please talk with Steve or our moderator, Sam Greene.

The UCC Connection

**New Hampshire Conference
United Church of Christ**



Steve and Carol Hess attended the NH UCC Conference Annual Meeting held in Concord on October 15th. Here are a few highlights they wanted to share.

Steve

Beyond wonderful fellowship, several important pieces of business were decided at the NHCUCC Annual Meeting. Rev. Sara Marean was elected as our new associate conference minister, transitioning into the position that has been held by Rev Richard Slater. Richard has been a dear friend to First Church over the years.

Several resolutions were passed including ideas about hybrid conference meetings, plastic pollution, reproductive rights, and the dignity of transgender people. Steve will be sharing these policy issues with our executive circle.

Carol

The annual meeting's keynote speaker, Richard Burxvoort Colligan, provided an uplifting contrast to the necessary 'business' aspects of the meeting. Colligan, a full-time composer and musician, serves across denominations teaching about music and spiritual formation. Colligan is known for hymn forms, simple chant and pop-rock arrangements; he is currently immersed in a long-term study of the Psalms.

He invited the attendees to turn inwards to inquire about their needs, joys, and concerns. Colligan's mixing of tunes we would recognize with words, new yet also accessible, changed the tone of the gathering. We all moved to a different place when singing his arrangements. I would enjoy experimenting with this approach to psalms and music at First Church!

2022 November/December Worship at First Church

Meditation text in bold; Call to Worship text in plain font

November 13

Guest Preacher:
Nancy Elder Wilfrid

December 11

Advent III
"Right Here!"
Isaiah 35:1-10
Luke 1:46-55

November 20

"The Better Claim"
Luke 1:68-79
Jeremiah 23:1-6

December 18

Advent IV
"Ask for a Sign"
Matthew 1:18-25
Isaiah 7:10-16
UCC Christmas Fund
Special Offering

November 27

Advent I
Guest Preacher:
Bob Kyte

December 24

*Christmas Eve Candlelight
Service at 5:00 pm*

December 4

Advent II
"The Peaceable Kingdom"
Matthew 3:1-12
Isaiah 11:1-10
Communion
Baptism

December 25

Christmas Day
"Star of Wonder"
Matthew 2:1-12
Isaiah 52:7-10

January 1, 2023

New Year's Day
"Another Year of Grace"
Matthew 2:13-23
Ecclesiastes 3:1-13
Communion

Scouting for Food



Beginning in early summer 2022, Jaffrey's Troop 33 of the Scouts of America, under the leadership of Scout Master Josh Levesque, have made First Church their home base. As part of this partnership, we are helping with their annual Scouting for Food project which will benefit more than 150 food pantries, kitchens and closets throughout New Hampshire.

Each year on the first weekend of November, Cub Scouts, Scouts, Venturers, Explorers and their leaders deliver Scouting for Food door hangers throughout their neighborhoods and state. On the next Saturday, Scouts return to collect the donated non-perishable food items left outside doors and take them to a convenient drop-off location within their local communities. In Jaffrey, this is the Food Bank at the United Church.

This year's Scouting for Food is taking advantage of lessons learned during COVID when door-to-door was not possible, and combining them with traditional efforts to get Scouts out into the community helping our neighbors and to maximize their efforts!

That's why you see large boxes for food donations in the narthex on Sunday November 6 and Sunday November 13.

ITEMS to DONATE: Rice, Pasta, Flour, Peanut Butter, Baking Mixes, Sauces/Soups, unsalted Nuts, Dry-goods, Cereal, and of course, anything in a can!

ITEMS to AVOID: Perishable items (such as bread or baked goods), expired foodstuffs (check the dates on cans and boxes), refrigerated items such as milk and frozen food! Try to avoid glass.

Items that are often overlooked: Seasonal foods (Pumpkin/cranberry), Spices, and Baby Food.

Buy a few extra items when shopping and dip into your own food stocks – all donations are greatly appreciated.



Thank you to our contributors:

Steve Miller
MaryJo Marvin
Josh Levesque

Pam Hill
Suze Campbell
Carol Hess



Get Your Thanksgiving Pies!

Our summer pie sales were very successful, and the money raised will be shared with local nonprofit agencies in Jaffrey and the greater Monadnock region.

Because we love baking, Pat Harmon and I will be offering Thanksgiving pies again this year for \$23 each. The choices are: pumpkin, apple, pecan, chocolate cream, and mince. If you have a family favorite, we might be able to accommodate you.

To order, call the number below no later than November 20th. Pam will return your call.

603-263-4743

Pre orders only for this special sale.

Pies can be picked up in the First Church Parish House between 2 and 4 pm on Wednesday, November 23.

Yours in pies, Pam Hill

Advent Study Series Begins November 30



They may be the most familiar of all scripture stories - the birth narratives from Matthew and Luke. We know these texts, and we love the myriad of musical carols written to remind us of the details. All of this is deeply embedded in our collective memory. *Yet...*rarely do we get to explore and discuss these narratives in any depth.

So...here is your opportunity: this Advent Steve will be leading a study series to explore these biblical texts that are both wondrous and strange! These educational gatherings will be held in-person on Wednesday afternoons at 4:00 pm in the Parish Hall beginning on *Wednesday, November 30, 2022* and running for four weeks. If there is interest, they will also be shared via zoom. We hope you will join us.

'Tis the Season

Decorating the Sanctuary

On the Saturday after Thanksgiving, November 26, volunteers will gather at 10:30 am to decorate the church for the Advent season and Christmas. Under the direction of Annie Gordon, the sanctuary will be readied for the holidays with poinsettias, wreaths, greens, and window candles. If you can help, please contact Annie at sparrowann1970@gmail.com or call 508-667-8615.

Christmas Tree Lighting on the Common

Gather on the Meetinghouse Common in Jaffrey Center on Sunday, December 4 at 4:15 pm when the sun will just be setting. You will find a warm fire, hot cider, cookies, and candle cups to hold as you sing. Join with neighbors and friends as we watch the tree light up and sing carols together in anticipation of the holiday season.

A beautiful 14-foot-tall Fraser/Balsam tree, known as a Fralsam, has already been chosen and will be delivered on Thanksgiving weekend by Windswept Mountain View Farm in Richmond, NH. The following weekend, on Sunday, December 4, luminaria will welcome one and all to this annual tree lighting event sponsored by The Jaffrey Center Village Improvement Society.

Will we need mittens and snow shovels this year? Or will there be clear skies? The weather may surprise us, but we can always count on the joyful spirit of the occasion.



Decorating the Christmas Tree

Christmas tree lighting and caroling



Special Offerings During Advent

UCC Christmas Fund

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementing pensions and health benefits and sending Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

This year, we rejoice at the opening of possibilities for gathering and worshipping together again, as we anticipate the good news of great joy at Christmas. Still, challenges remain for many of our pastoral leaders who continue to experience loss of income as congregations struggle with budget shortfalls.

Please show your continued gratitude for our active and retired UCC clergy who need our support by encouraging your congregation to give generously to the Christmas Fund this year. Special envelopes will be provided; donations in any amount are welcomed. If you write a check, make it out to First Church in Jaffrey, with UCC Christmas Fund in the memo line.

Note: Our last UCC Special Offering was Neighbors in Need, collected in October. Thanks to all of those who gave generously – First Church sent \$990 to the NIN program!

First Church’s Own Christmas Offering

Traditionally, money collected at the Christmas Eve Candlelight service and the Sunday before Christmas was pooled into a Christmas Fund that benefited local organizations. Because of COVID, we were not able to have these services in the past two years, although we conducted a “virtual” fundraising project.

This December we are able to return to the popular Candlelight Service. And, we will have a special offering for our own Christmas Fund. The Benevolence Circle selects recipients based on recommendations and community needs. The Jaffrey Food Pantry, Town Welfare Fund, and the ambulance service have been past recipients. If you have any recommendations, please contact Benevolence Circle Chair, Marcia Breckenridge at marciabreck@gmail.com or 603-899-6973.

As we get closer to Christmas, please consider a donation in any amount and send it to the FCiJ at PO Box 673, Jaffrey, NH 03458 with a note that it’s for the Jaffrey Christmas Fund.



COVID Protocols

First Church's COVID protocols respond to COVID rates in our area and the nature of the gathering. The Executive Circle examines the status of COVID each month and adjusts church policies as needed.

At the time of this newsletter, the CDC recommendations are as follows: The CDC does not require mask wearing in communities at a low or medium level of virus circulation. Currently Hillsborough and Cheshire counties are at a **LOW level**. Masking is per your personal preference, but is recommended if you are immunocompromised. Your vaccination and boosters are your protection against severe illness and death.

We will continue to hold worship in the spacious sanctuary at 10:30 on Sundays. Masking and distancing are recommended.

Families and groups using the church facilities will determine their own COVID protocols and sign a waiver for First Church.

Decking Our "Halls" With Pots of Poinsettias!

Each season our Sanctuary is beautifully adorned with poinsettias and greenery. We invite you to sponsor a poinsettia to decorate our "Halls" this Advent season! Each poinsettia is \$30 and the plants can be taken home after Dec. 25.

The deadline for sponsorships is November 20th.

Yes, I would like to sponsor a Poinsettia!

Please fill out below and leave in the "Admin" mail slot or mail to the PO Box below with payment.

Your Name(s): _____
(if a non-member, please provide contact info)

In honor of/memory of:

Please include a check made payable to:
The Treasurer, First Church in Jaffrey, P.O. Box 673, Jaffrey, NH 03452
Include "poinsettia" on the memo line, please.