



First Church in Jaffrey

Weatherwane

November-December

2023



The sanctuary has an updated look with more space and new carpet, thanks to the Trustees and a successful capital campaign.

The Time for Stewardship – Planning for 2024

Our mountain has many faces in many seasons: fragrant buds in spring, wildflowers in summer, brilliant colors in fall, and wispy snow in winter. Each season offers a reflection of the abundance of creation. And in every season, all our creator asks of us is to be thankful.

This same abundance is blossoming all over our church community: our worship life with amazing music and broadening spirit, our expanding faith studies with discussion and growth, opportunities to serve our neighbors and our world, thoughtful and much needed care of our buildings and grounds, and most of all, an ever-deepening sense of community. We are, in each moment, becoming more and more connected.

Again, what is asked of us as we welcome these profound gifts into our lives – simply the offering of our gratitude! Scripture teaches that gratitude is an investment: *“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”* (1 Peter 4:10)

In this season of Thanksgiving, we challenge you – members and friends – to invest in gratitude and continue this abundance into 2024!

The Treasurer and Trustees are working on an operating budget to sustain new growth and allow First Church to serve our neighbors and the world more fully and faithfully. But we need an estimate of financial support from you to allow the church to plan strategically for the next year and be prepared for more growth.

Would you join us again and make a financial pledge or gift for 2024? Pledge cards are available in the narthex and the Parish House. Look for an e-blast reminder next week. Any questions? Contact janetgrant@firstchurchinjaffrey.org.

We are grateful for your generosity and commitment in 2023, and we look forward to another year of renewal and community.

Steve Miller, Pastor

Sam Greene, Moderator

Janet Grant, Chair of Trustees



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Where Did Civility Go?

Excerpts from the “Reflection” given by Sam Greene, filling in for Steve on Sunday, October 29

In second grade I won a year-end award for good citizenship. A shy kid, it seemed like the easiest way to make my way through life at school was to be polite to others. To be clear, I was not always a responsible kid, but I was usually civil.

Bringing up a child in the 2000s was a mind-bending experience for Toni and me because of the social influences that we were all subjected to. Think about the advent of computers in the 1980s, the invention of the internet in the 1990s, the explosion of cell phone use in the 2000s, and the advent of social media since 2010. The complexity, confusion, noise and speed of our world has gotten worse; and I don't think one can argue that the decline of civility is not directly related to technology, the worldwide web, and social media.

When I reflect on the lack of civility I see on the road, I think back to the days when travel down Rte. 124 occurred at 5 miles an hour. What a peaceful and more civil time that must have been.

Here are a few words that represent actions that I consider contrary to incivility: Bullying, Dishonesty, Disregard, Conceit, Injustice, Insincerity, Hostility, Selfishness, Self-dealing, Rudeness, Loudness, Intolerance, Interruption, Pollution.

Think about how those actions feeds into every aspect of our news cycles and lives: War, genocide, famine, global warming, road rage, mass shooting, homicides, crime, corruption, suicide, drug abuse, anxiety, isolationism.

I'd like to let you in on my personal holy trinity; and how I think about citizenship and civility toward others.

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Mindfulness: At church, I sit by myself ideally in a spot of sun on the south side of the church. I like to shut my eyes, breathe, and drink in the music, scripture, and readings. Friends of mine who are not church goers, or who are no longer church goers, question why I have an interest in church. I say I am much less sure about organized religion than I am about spirit, meditation and mindfulness; congregation and community.

Empathy: Some might disagree, but I like to listen more than I like to talk. I'm lucky to have a job that's trained me to be empathetic. My work at the NH Department of Revenue involves administrating, educating (and very often mollifying) taxpayers about their property taxes. It has improved my ability to listen to people. Being too dogmatic in explaining the property valuation process and not listening to whatever the taxpayer wants to talk about, never goes well.

The Way of Civility: Start with a genuine smile. I know of no other really good hands-on advice. It means you are glad to see someone. Listen, breathe, and think before speaking. Don't speak aggressively, sarcastically or in a way that demeans. I love the adaptations from Colossians 4:6, "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone."

What happens when we are not civil? Well, it hurts to be chastised, criticized, sniped at or scorned. We've all felt it at some point in our lives and we should remember, again and again, not to do it. It is so unnecessary and usually occurs when we don't listen and are too quick to talk, when we are reactionary, when we are not mindful of how we would want to be treated.

I hope every day this coming week you will find yourself mindful. I hope we can all recognize the need for compassion, kindness, patience toward all those that we encounter, every minute of every day, no matter our moods. Remember, breathe, and ask, is it necessary to say? In addition, as we learned from our adaptation of Thessalonians, I hope you will go even further and "encourage one another and build each other up." Don't just be civil, but pay a compliment and encourage.

Our church and community require civility at their core, and we should sprinkle that civility everywhere we go ... like salt. Remember the line in today's poetry reading: "We have so little of each other, now. So far from tribe and fire"; relatively disconnected from each other in this busy, cyberworld. Perhaps, these brief moments of kind exchange are the true dwelling of the Holy.

2023 November/December Worship at First Church

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

November 5, 2023

“Let the people say...Amen!”

Matthew 23:1-12

Psalm 72

Communion

November 12, 2023

“Turn the World Around”

Matthew 14:22-25, 28:18-20

Isaiah 55

Celebrating Church Camp

November 19, 2023

“Invest in Gratitude”

Matthew 25:14-30

Psalm 90

November 26, 2023

“An Act of Praise”

Matthew 25:31-46

Psalm 100

December 3, 2023 – First Sunday in Advent

“The Veil is Thin”

Isaiah 64:1-9

Psalm 80

Communion

Special offering:

UCC Christmas Fund

December 10, 2023 – Second Sunday in Advent

“The Voice”

Mark 1:1-8

Isaiah 40:1-11

December 17, 2023 – Third Sunday in Advent

“Can You Believe It?”

Isaiah 61:1-4

Psalm 126

December 24, 2023 – Fourth Sunday in Advent

“Let it Be”

Luke 1:26-38

Psalm 89

December 24, 2023 – Christmas Eve (5:00 pm)

December 31, 2023

“I Have Not Failed”

Luke 2:22-40

Psalm 148



Don't Forget Ukraine!

By Ilona Kwiecien



I've just returned from my fifth trip to Poland since the war in Ukraine started; it is difficult to fathom that almost two years have passed since Russia invaded. And – as attention is slowly drawn away to other parts of our world struggling with war and devastation – it might be tempting to believe that, well, “we have done what we could here.”

Unfortunately, that would be inaccurate.

While many refugees have returned to their homes in Ukraine (sadly, I heard about several people who returned, only to be killed), about 2 million remain in Poland. There is good news in that some refugees who stayed have been able to start afresh, finding jobs and homes; however, there remain many who need continued assistance, especially single parents, the elderly, children, and the disabled. I was told there is a small trickle of Ukrainians coming into Poland now, but that generally they are not destitute and already have support from friends/family.

Supporting Lapigua and Dom Matki

Overall funding for Ukrainians in Poland has waned, but the two organizations First Church has been supporting – Lapigua and Dom Matki – continue to focus on helping these groups, primarily in Poland but also in Ukraine where there are many internally displaced persons. They struggle to obtain funding. And my friend Lukasz continues to go back and forth into Ukraine (sadly, often to attend the funerals of friends); he is currently concentrating his efforts on helping veterans who have been injured and is part of a team that seeks to ransom children from Russian kidnapping. When I mentioned – after hearing some of his stories – that the situation in Ukraine sounds akin to the “Wild, Wild West” he smiled and said, “Yes, the Wild, Wild East!”

Stephanie and Lapigua in Zamosc have ventured into new territory by supporting an organization in Lutsk, Ukraine that maintains a home for evacuees, offers psychiatric assistance, and sends supplies to the front. Locally, they continue to run the Ukrainian community center, offering programs, food packages, and clothing. Volunteers (both Ukrainians and Poles) are slowly but surely fixing up the place as funds become available. They are also helping a community of disabled individuals. We explored the possibility of having some of our help go for specific needs as they arise.

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Don't Forget Ukraine! (cont'd)

Likewise, Dom Matki in Warsaw with its network of volunteers has extended its help. I actually asked the director, Anna, whether she sleeps! In addition to the mothers and children at the home, they support single parents in the area (she made a point of noting that there are a few fathers in this group) and disabled individuals (to include a child with Reye's syndrome), send clothing and other supplies to Ukraine, create special programs, and put together comfort packages for women soldiers on the front lines. For Christmas they will have a Christmas tree with decorations that list special requests from children. Anna and I discussed how First Church might participate in this endeavor.

If you would like to donate to Ukrainian Relief Projects, please write a check to Refugee Support or First Church in Jaffrey (with Refugee Support in the memo line). This is a community-wide effort that First Church administers. Mail to First Church in Jaffrey, PO Box 673, Jaffrey, NH 03452.



Photo courtesy of Suze Campbell

A special coffee hour celebrated a visit from our former interim minister, David Felton who traveled to New Hampshire from Indianapolis in October to visit with friends and congregations.

Left to right: Steve Miller, David Felton, Gene Faxon

The Grace of Flowers in Worship



Flowers have a long historical and cultural connection to many different religions, but flowers are more than decorations; at their best, they enhance worship and meditation. There's a long tradition at First Church of gracing the altar with flowers or seasonal decorations. Flowers can also honor the memory of family and friends or commemorate special occasions.

Please consider donating altar flowers on a Sunday of your choice. Whether it is to remember a loved one or because your hydrangeas have just bloomed and are too gorgeous not to share, we would love to hear from you.

The Worship Circle has created a calendar to schedule donations. If someone has already chosen the date you wish, we will work with you to find another Sunday. Donors will be recognized in the Sunday bulletin, along with the person's name or occasion you wish to honor. If you would like to make your donation an annual event, let us know and we'll save the date and remind you each year.

It's easy to donate. You can purchase an arrangement from a florist – we have two in Jaffrey who are excellent designers and know our sanctuary. Colls Garden Center and Daffodils are happy to work with individuals, and they deliver to the church. Another option is to purchase flowers or cut from your garden, arrange them, and bring them to the church on Saturday afternoon or early Sunday morning, at least 30 minutes before the service.

In addition, if you are a gardener and would be able to "fill-in" as needed, please let us know. We will put you on the go-to list and will ask for flowers when no donations have been scheduled for a given Sunday. Let us know a phone number and email address we can use to contact you. You can also find a sign-up sheet in the Parish House. During the Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter seasons, the Worship Circle usually provides altar decorations.

As always, we are at our best when we are working together to beautify the sanctuary.

Worship Circle

Contact us through admin@firstchurchinjaffrey.org

Coll's Garden Center 603-532-7516

Daffodil's 603-532-8282

Inside First Church – Classes, Circles, New Members

Advent Faith Series: Christmas Carols – Singing our Story



*The 2022 Christmas Eve Quartet: Jim Reiman,
Linda Grant Reiman, Janet Grant and Steve Miller*

During Advent 2023, Steve and Gene will lead a study series on the beauty and bounty of Christmas music! Exploring a wide range of carols based in the birth narratives, we will seek to discover both the devotional and theological power of these songs. And of course, we will sing! These educational gatherings will be held in-person on Wednesday afternoons at 4:00 pm in the Parish Hall beginning on **Wednesday, December 6, 2023**, and running for three weeks (12/13, 12/20). If there is interest, they will also be shared via zoom. We hope you will join us.

New Members

During Advent, we will create a time of welcome for anyone interested in becoming members or associate members of First Church. On Sunday morning, December 3, 2023, immediately following worship, we will host a membership orientation to answer questions, offer possibilities, explore rights and responsibilities, and explain the different categories of connection (member, associate member, friend)!

Then on Sunday morning, December 10, 2023, we will have a ceremony during our morning worship to welcome folks into the life of our church. If you are interested in membership in any category or have questions about the process, please talk with Steve or our moderator, Sam Greene or simply join us at the membership orientation.

Building Community

Building community is important to all of us at First Church. We hear from many of you that you are pleased with our growth in this area over the past year. It's important to the community's health that we are honest and open about our feelings concerning the church's future direction. We won't always agree of course. But this kind of personal sharing - clear, direct and from the heart - helps us to deepen the bonds that sustain us. If you have new ideas or concerns, speak directly to Steve or to a member of the Pastoral Relations Circle (PRC), or come to a quarterly meeting where we learn and grow together.

PRC Circle: Steve Miller, Carol Hess, Sally O'Brien, Bobbie Gilbert, Chair

AARP Smart Drivers Course Offered at First Church

On November 29th and 30th, from 1 to 4 PM each day, Lee DeBell will present AARP's Smart Driver Course at First Church in Jaffrey. Lee has been teaching this six-hour course as a volunteer since 2014 and continues to do so because it has made a difference in how he now approaches driving, and he wants to share what he has learned with others.

The course explains research-based strategies to help drivers keep driving safely for as long as possible. It addresses the many changes that have occurred since we started driving, including changes in our bodies as well as changes in our cars, roadways, and laws. The course also provides information to help each individual determine if there is a need to consider limiting or stopping driving, and things that can be done to make it easier if either of those actions become appropriate.

After taking this course, participants may qualify for a multiyear discount on car insurance, but will need to contact their insurance company for specific information. AARP requires a fee to attend this course (\$20 for AARP members, \$25 for all others), which can be paid at time of attendance by check made payable to AARP or cash. To reserve a place in the two classes, call Lee at 603-491-6349 or email him at leedebell@comcast.net.



Surprise!

Millie Vigneault enjoys a party organized by family and friends to celebrate her 90th birthday at the Park Theater on October 28.

Special Offerings During Advent

Our Own Christmas Offering

At the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service on Sunday December 24, the offering will be dedicated to local welfare organizations. The Benevolence Circle selects recipients based on recommendations from the congregation and community needs. Past recipients have included the Jaffrey Food Pantry, the Town Welfare Fund, and the ambulance service. If you have any suggestions, please contact Benevolence Circle Chair Marcia Breckenridge at marciabreck@gmail.com or 603-899-6973.

UCC Christmas Fund – Special Offering

First Church will collect the UCC Christmas Fund special offering on the first Sunday of Advent, December 3, 2023. Donations in any amount are appreciated. If you write a check, please note UCC Christmas Fund in the memo line.



THE CHRISTMAS FUND: "GRACE UPON GRACE"

"From Christ's fullness we have all received, grace upon grace."

John 1:16

Grace is truly at the center of everything for us humans. Grace shapes our faith, our family, our friendships, and our identity. Grace is not just being given the benefit of the doubt, or God bestowing favor on the less than worthy. Grace is also the root of gratitude and thankfulness. It is at the heart of our thanksgiving/eucharistic meal. "Grace upon grace" is a reminder of the great gifts of God to us, and an expression of our grateful response to that fullness.

Your gifts to the Christmas Fund allow the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance to provide grace, hope, and joy through financial relief to UCC pastors, lay church leaders, and their families. Thanks to you, no request goes unfulfilled. Your graceful response to the Christmas Fund appeal ensures the flow of loving support will not be interrupted.

In 2022, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled:

- Monthly pension supplementation for 218 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,042,726)
- Health benefits supplementation for 86 retired clergy and lay employees (\$181,389)
- Emergency grants for 55 individuals and families (\$138,022)
- Christmas "Thank You" gift checks to 479 retired clergy and lay employees (\$278,500)

THE CHRISTMAS FUND

For the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund
Give online at www.christmasfund.org.

“How Can We Keep from Singing?”

Hello First Church friends!

A few weeks ago we expanded our quartet to create a choir for a service called “How Can I Keep from Singing!” Church friends and members stepped up to add their voices to fill our sanctuary with beautiful music. It was great!

I thank you all who joined us. Now I invite you to join us singing for two other dates:

Thanksgiving service, Sunday, Nov. 19.
We will rehearse Saturday Nov.18 at 9:30am.

Christmas Eve service, Sunday, Dec.24 at 5pm.
Rehearsals Saturdays at 10am Dec.2, 9, 19, 23.
Rehearsals will be no longer than an hour.

I am looking at some quite beautiful pieces for Christmas Eve. I hope you can join us.

Best,
Gene Faxon
Minister of Music



Betsy Feiker, Steve Miller, Gene Faxon.

Please join our musicians and SING!

Thank you for your contributions to the November-December Weathervane!

MaryJo Marvin, Steve Miller, Ilona Kwiecien, Carol Hess, Sam Greene, Janet Grant,
Members of the Worship Circle, Fellowship Circle and PRC Circle, Marcia
Breckenridge, Linda Giragosian, Suze Campbell, Gene Faxon

Looking Ahead to Advent and Christmas!

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FELLOWSHIP

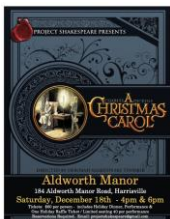
Whenever two or more are gathered, God is there.

One of the most important functions of a church is to provide opportunities for our community to meet, know, and care for one another. We are in the process of organizing the Fellowship Circle, as described in our Bylaws, and would like to invite all church friends to be a part of these events. We will make sure the coffee is brewing during church each Sunday, so we can all gather for a cup of coffee following worship. On the first Sunday of the month, we'll be celebrating all of us who have birthdays that month.

Hanging of the Greens on November 26



And we will kick off the holiday season with a Hanging of the Greens celebration. Join us on **Sunday, November 26 at 4:00 pm** to decorate the church and share a glass of holiday cheer. There are many more plans in the works – for pancake breakfasts, wine and cheese receptions, potlucks, and more! The Fellowship Circle's mission is to help us all to spread the joy of friendship and care. Special events will be announced in the Weathervane and the weekly bulletin. If you have ideas for fellowship opportunities throughout the year, please let us know!



Project Shakespeare's Christmas Carol & Parsonage Open House

On December 17th at 7:00 pm, Project Shakespeare will present "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens and directed by Deborah Shakespeare Thurber in our sanctuary at First Church. Tickets for this delightful production are \$15 for adults and \$5 for children under 12 and will be available at the door 1/2 hour before the production.

Steve and Jill are delighted to welcome any members or friends to the parsonage before the production for a cup of holiday cheer. Please join us between 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm!

Fellowship Circle: Sarah Isaacs, Kathy McCloy Raleigh, & Jill Tyler



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 \$35 and the plants can be taken home after Dec. 25.

The deadline for sponsorships is **November 26th**.

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): _____
(Please provide contact information: email or phone number)

In honor of/memory of:

Please include a check made payable to:

*The Treasurer, First Church in Jaffrey
PO Box 673
Jaffrey, NH 03452*

Include "poinsettia" on the memo line please.

