

Steeple Talk

First Congregational Church of Littleton
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PASTOR'S MESSAGE

Wow! 2010 already! I thought 1950 was a big deal. Instead of being 9 (single digit) I was going to be 10 (double digit), now 2010 and I'm beginning to experience the shock of not being 39 anymore. That goes for churches, too. We aren't as young as we once were, but hopefully we are wiser and more compassionate. One side effect of aging is the experiencing of difficulties and situations that make us more tolerant of others; we have walked more in others shoes now. We are more like family with long histories of walking through years and years of life together. We know a common sorrow of saying good-bye to long time friends and the joy of saying hello to new members of the family. This year will most probably bring new people and new life to First Congregational Church.

Just as I write this on December 10, 2009, the electronic web is opening our message to all who might want to consider becoming our new settled pastor. There is mystery and excitement in that and we all want to add our prayers that God will guide just the right person to us and that our Search Committee will recognize that person. All this means that there will be possibly some change in these coming months. Change is a word and a situation that most of us do not like very much. Someone once said that the "seven last words of the church" are, "We never did it that way before." The future is going to be a challenge for sure but it can also be an adventure and exciting with wonderful rewards. One of the problems that we all face today in our beloved church is the fact that the world and the culture of the people around us has drastically changed. It isn't 1803 or 1834 or 1950 anymore. In the early years the church was at the very heart and center of the community. In law it was what made the community legal. Then, in the 1950's, a church in America could open the doors and people flocked in, they wanted to be part of it. None of that is true anymore. New England is known now as the least churching area of our country and churches are now on the outside not the inside of our communities in terms of influence.

We live in a culture where people don't even consider joining a church; it is usually irrelevant to their lives. But people do consider themselves "spiritual" without the church. We must learn how to relate and operate in such an environment. How can we meet the needs of those already inside our walls and reach out and touch and make a difference in the lives of those outside our walls?

I have found a couple of useful metaphors for this. One is the different culture problem. If we were to go to deepest darkest Africa where no one had heard of the

church or our Lord, how would we go about introducing such to those people? We know the Lord loves them and wants them to love one another but how do you communicate this? Among the early work with the Eskimo, the missionaries had trouble explaining heaven and hell. Hell was a warm place and that made it seem to those frozen people to be a pretty nice place. In the same way, in Africa, what would be the difficulties of communicating the important concepts? In our world here in Littleton, we face a people who do not see importance in religion but who do want "spirituality", how do we make those transitions? There will be changes ahead if we are to succeed.

That brings up the second metaphor that I find useful. To me life inside the church can be like a buffet. You don't have many of those in New Hampshire but in the Midwest they are very popular. For one fee you graze among hundreds of dishes of appetizers, salads, vegetables, casseroles, meats, drinks, fruits and desserts. No one expects you to eat everything, it is too much. If you did you would look like a preacher I know. But rather at the buffet you choose the spinach and Brussels sprouts that you like and forget the ice cream and pie that are less desirable. I believe that a church can offer just such a buffet at times with the changes that may come. We can leave most of the sacred cows that we find important and add a number of other things that are important to others. Then we each choose what is important and appetizing to us and rejoice that we can all sit down to the same family meal together.

I don't know what changes 2010 will bring but it is sure to bring some. I pray that we will not view these as horrible things to be avoided but rather as opportunities to be embraced. Each of us can choose our own healthy diet, and respond to new healthy growth of the church which we and Jesus love so much.

May we be blessed to be more and more what God desires us to be in 2010.

Your friend and Interim Pastor,
Gene

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Upcoming Events

- ◆ Jan. 8- 7:00 PM- Friday night Ballroom Dancing resumes
- ◆ Jan. 9 - 8:00am Men's Breakfast fellowship @ Krill's
- ◆ Jan 31- during worship- Food Collection Sunday
- ◆ Feb. 7th - after church- Annual Meeting

Editor: Alice Muh (muhfamily@roadrunner.com)

Production Staff: Pat Whipple, Anna Jackman

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

January 2010

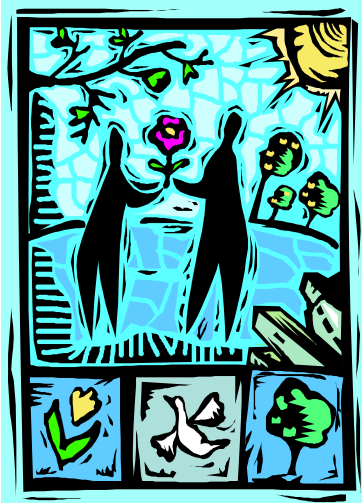
Office Hours: Mon - Fri. 8:30 am - 12:30 pm

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

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

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 -Pastor's Sabbath 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall OFFICE CLOSED NEW YEAR'S DAY	2 7:30 PM-AA - Fellowship
3 09:15 AM-Choir Rehearsal 10:00 AM-Communion 10:00 AM-Worship/Sunday School 11:15 AM-Coffee Fellowship	4 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	5 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 05:00 PM-Property Committee 06:30 PM-Deacons Meeting	6 EPIPHANY 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 12:00 PM-Store to Door 06:30 PM-Choir Rehearsal	7 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 5:00 PM Ecumenical Youth Planning	8 Pastor's Sabbath 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 7:00 pm Ballroom Dancing – Fellowship Hall	9 08:00 AM-Men's Breakfast Group at the Krill's 7:30 PM-AA - Fellowship
10 09:15 AM-Choir Rehearsal 10:00 AM-Worship/Sunday School 11:15 AM-Coffee Fellowship	11 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 05:30 PM-SLLC Board Meeting 05:30 PM-Finance Meeting	12 10:30 AM Riverglen 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	13 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 12:00 PM-Store to Door 1:30 PM Ladies Society Meeting 06:00 PM-Christian Ed Meeting 06:30 PM-Choir Rehearsal	14 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	15 Pastor's Sabbath 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 7:00 pm Ballroom Dancing – Fellowship Hall	16 7:30 PM-AA - Fellowship
17 09:15 AM-Choir Rehearsal 10:00 AM-Worship/Sunday School 11:15 AM-Coffee Fellowship	18 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	19 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 07:00 PM-Council Meeting	20 10:00 AM-Clergy 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 12:00 PM-Store to Door 06:30 PM-Choir Rehearsal	21 08:00 AM-Gene at Conference 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	22 -Pastor's Sabbath 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 5:00 PM Boy Scout Troop 6-Ladies Parlor 7:00 pm Ballroom Dancing – Fellowship Hall	23 7:00 AM- Boy Scout Troop 6- Ladies Parlor 07:30 PM-AA – Fellowship 5:00 PM – Sunday AM Boy Scout Troop 6
24 09:15 AM-Choir Rehearsal 10:00 AM-Worship/Sunday School 11:15 AM-Coffee Fellowship	25 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	26 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	27 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 12:00 PM-Store to Door 06:30 PM-Choir Rehearsal	28 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	29 -Pastor's Sabbath 11:00 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 7:00 pm Ballroom Dancing – Fellowship Hall	30 7:30 PM-AA – Fellowship
31 09:15 AM-Choir Rehearsal 10:00 AM-Worship/Sunday School 11:15 AM-Coffee Fellowship 10:00 AM-Food Collection			Please plan to attend the Annual Meeting 2-7-09 Your input is very important!			

ACHIEVING A BALANCED BUDGET



The Finance Committee along with the Church Council will be proposing a balanced budget at the Annual Meeting, February 7, 2010. This is a change from past years when we approved deficit budgets hoping that the difference would be made up during the year. This is not being fiscally responsible and therefore the proposed budget you see at the Annual Meeting will be balanced. However this will not be achieved without cost to programming and services. Our original proposed budget expense for 2010 is slightly ahead of last year due to the search process and attracting a qualified minister for our congregation. Fortunately, we have been blessed that 72% of the pledges received this fall have been increased an average of nearly 15%. However, we have received fewer pledges than last year. A small number of pledges received remained the same and a few were decreased. In total, our pledges are \$230 above last year when the congregation approved a \$13,000 deficit budget. Based on the pledges we have received to date, we are \$25,000 short of our first draft of proposed expenses. In light of this, the Church Council has asked each committee to reduce their proposed expenses by 14% to make expenses match the income we currently can expect. Were it not for those cherished and dedicated members who chose to increase their pledge, we would be facing many more unhealthy cuts. I encourage those who have not made their pledge to do so prior to the Council Meeting on January 19th.

Phil Krill,
Moderator

Expense Budget	Budget 2008	Actual 2008	Budget 2009	Budget 2010	Change from 2009
DEACONS	5,150	4,867	4,050	9,450	5,400
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION	5,400	3,898	4,500	4,500	0
MINISTRY OF MUSIC	2,500	2,032	2,400	2,400	0
PROPERTY	49,516	46,964	47,523	45,386	-2,137
STEWARDSHIP & FINANCE	1,100	920	800	1,245	445
PASTOR SALARY & BENEFITS	64,925	56,952	58,400	63,400	5,000
STAFF SALARY & BENEFITS	50,660	53,789	50,774	43,570	-7,204
MISSION & OUTREACH	15,750	15,600	13,000	13,000	0
TOTAL EXPENSE	195,001	185,022	181,447	182,951	1,504
Income Budget					
Total Pledges NEEDED	133,612	133,031	133,600	147,101	13,501
Loose Offerings	13,000	7,386	8,000	4,800	-3,200
Church School Offerings	200	7	35	50	15
Scheduled withdrawal from investments	21,000	20,272	21,000	21,000	0
Fund raisers	6,100	5,034	5,500	6,000	500
Use of facilities	3,000	3,512	3,065	4,000	935
TOTAL INCOME	176,912	169,242	171,200	182,951	11,751
INCOME MINUS EXPENSE	-18,089	-15,780	-10,247	0	10,247

“Classifieds and Notices”

Here I am, Lord!

The nominating committee is looking for a few committed members to help with the mission of the church. Please say **YES** when asked to help!

“Whenever you take a step forward, you are bound to disturb something.”

Indira Gandhi (1917-1984)

CALENDARS FOR SALE

2010 is now here! The Music Committee is selling calendars for the 2010 year complete with weekly devotions. There is still time to get organized!



This is a fundraiser to obtain some new music.

The Finance Committee thanks you in advance for keeping up with your pledges for the 2009 financial year. Due to the IRS rules, everyone needs to be aware that our 2009 statements for financial giving will reflect only those donations that have been received in 2009. Any checks dated in 2009 but not received until 2010 will be recorded on 2010 financial statements. Statements will be available by the middle of January.

Financial Report

YTD as of November 30, 2009

Member support: \$119,935.97
 Transf. from Trust Funds: \$18,582.74
 Income from Fund Raisers: \$5969.57
 Total Income: \$153,732.31
 Total Expenses: \$144,287.74
 Net: \$9,444.57

A little help from the Lord

A little girl, dressed in her Sunday best, was running as fast as she could, trying not to be late for Bible class. As she ran she prayed, 'Dear Lord, please don't let me be late! Dear Lord, please don't let me be late!'

While she was running and praying, she tripped on a curb and fell, getting her clothes dirty and tearing her dress. She got up, brushed herself off, and started running again! As she ran she once again began to pray, 'Dear Lord, please don't let me be late... But please don't shove me either!'



Pray without ceasing

Our prayer concerns and celebrations are listed in the Sunday bulletin each week and are also posted on our website at www.1stconglittleton.org

Mission 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.

Altar flowers

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.



SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE

Welcoming, friendly, theologically diverse cong. founded in 1803 in the White Mountains, seeks F/T pastor who enjoys preaching & shares our passion for CE & community involvement. Seeking someone to help us grow in spiritual wisdom & maturity who appreciates strong lay leadership & desires to work with us.

oooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

This is the ad that appeared in December in the employment opportunities section of the United Church of Christ website. Now we wait for men and women to be interested in us.

While the Search Committee waits, it is learning about interviewing, conducting a mock interview, talking about how to read and evaluate candidate profiles, and meeting with Gary Schulte, our NH UCC Conference liaison, to learn more about this phase of the search process.

We've now moved into our confidential phase as well. I will write monthly Steeple Talk articles and make announcements in church as the committee sees fit. However, committee members will be less able to answer direct questions as we need to protect the identity of people in conversation with us until the appropriate time for public comment. We seek your understanding, patience and prayers for this next period of the search process.

Ann Craxton,
for the Search Committee

A LITTLE CHURCH HISTORY



Our church, ever a dynamic institution, had undergone many changes over the years. One thing the members have been extra vigilant about is the upkeep of the building. We can be grateful to our foremothers and father for this. There are many stories of churches who have had to close their doors and either sell or demolish their properties due to lack of upkeep.

This picture shows the chancel before the 1946 renovation. From the Church History booklet: "In 1946 it was voted to renovate the church chancel, choir stalls, repaint and rebuild the arch over the organ."

Submitted by Dotto Ruggles, this picture shows members in period costume for a theatrical production on the old chancel. See Dotto for more details on this photo.

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STEEPLE TALK

JANUARY 2010

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

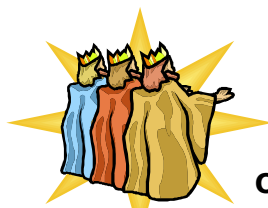
Moderator: Phil Krill
Vice Moderator: Alice Muh
Treasurer: Mary Menzies
Assistant Treasurer: Marti Faulkner
Financial Secretary: Joyce Krill

Committee Chairs

Christian Ed.: Linda Warden & Cheryl Kerr
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



Ordinary Time I: the season after Epiphany

Epiphany follows on January 6. In the Eastern church, this is the date associated with the celebration of Christ's birth. In the West, the feast has a double theme: the visit of the three Magi or "Wise Men" who brought gifts to the infant Jesus, and the "manifestation" (*epiphaneia* in Greek) of Christ's Good News (Gospel).

The first Sunday after the Epiphany is the Baptism of Christ—an observance of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River and a time to remember our own baptism into the Body of Christ. The remaining Sundays until Ash Wednesday are part of Ordinary Time—a season that serves as a bridge between the major seasons of the Church Year, in this case, between Christmas and Lent. The traditional color of Ordinary Time is green, a symbol of spiritual growth.

Taken from WWW.UCC.org