

Steeple Talk

First Congregational Church of Littleton
189 Main Street, Littleton, NH 03561

January 2012

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Pastor's Message



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Upcoming Events

- ◆ Jan. 8th - Discussion session for new vision statements after church
- ◆ Jan. 14th @8:00 am Men's Breakfast Fellowship At Lofgren's
- ◆ Jan. 15th 22nd 29th Psalms Adult Bible Study after church
- ◆ Jan. 17th Church Council Meeting
- ◆ Feb. 5th ANNUAL MEETING and Pot-Luck Lunch

Editor: Alice Muh
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Production staff:
Pat Whipple & Anna Jackman

And so, here we are. It was a wonderful season, full of joy and love, full of sharing and embracing, full of peace and goodwill for all. And yes (let's tell the truth) there were some anxious moments, too. There were moments when we didn't feel quite so joyful, moments when the traffic, the crowds, the pressure got to us and "goodwill to all" took a backseat to somewhat less charitable thoughts. But on the whole, taking everything together, we had a good Christmas. We spent good times with our families and visited in each other's homes; we exchanged our gifts; we shared our hopes and our love with one another; we sang the songs that connect us with Christmases long ago and far away and celebrated the birth of Jesus, the precious child who came to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

At times like these, we find ourselves reflecting on where we are. We take a step back from our ordinary lives, our familiar surroundings, and let ourselves notice the changes that have been taking place under our noses. We notice the changes in our faces, our bodies; we notice how big the children are getting, how strong they're becoming, how very unique and precious each one of them is; we notice that our friendships have deepened; we notice that our marriages have matured; we notice how all our relationships have changed, slowly, almost imperceptibly, during the year. We step back and look at the intricate and beautiful patterns that make up our lives; and some of the patterns are familiar, reassuring; and some of the patterns are new and very surprising. We marvel at the jeweled patterns we find in our lives as we step back in times like these, step back and appreciate our lives in all their complexity and richness.

And then, as a new year begins, we return our attention to ordinary things. We pay the bills, split wood, help our children with their homework; we work through rough spots with spouses and friends; we turn our attention to the study of the Psalms; we look at new ways to strengthen our worship; we look for new ways to apply our mission statements; we put our heads together to figure out how to close the gap between our pledges and the work we feel called to do. At home, work or church, in every part of our lives, we turn our attention to the making the decisions that will shape our lives in the coming year, long after the last "Noel" is sung and the tinsel is put away. The season of Christmas will come and go; the beauty and power of Jesus' birth will stay with us every day of our lives, guiding us into God's amazing future, a future that is already waiting for us, filled with joy and deep abiding peace.

blessings,
david

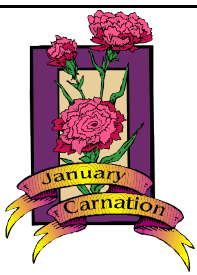
First Congregational Church

January 2012

Office Hours: Mon – Fri 8:30 am – 12:30 pm

Pastor's Office Hours: Tues – Fri 9:00am – 2:00 pm

Music Director's Office Hours: Weds 6:00 – 8:00 pm, Sunday 9:00 – 11:00 am

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 NEW YEARS DAY 9:30 am Pre worship coffee fellowship 10:00 AM-Sunday Worship 7:00 PM-Ballroom Dancing	2 Pastor's Sabbath CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 7:00 PM-NCSC Meeting	3 10:30 AM-Clergy Group Meeting 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 7:00 PM-AI Anon/Ladies Parlor	4 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 06:30 PM-Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM-Missions Meeting 8:00 PM-Weds. Night AA	5 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 7:00 PM-Deacons Meeting	6 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	7 7:30 PM-AA - Fellowship Hall
8 9:00 AM-Adult Bible study 10:00 AM-Sunday Worship/Communion & Sunday School 11:15 AM-SPECIAL INFORMATIONAL MEETING & REFRESMENTS 7:00 PM-Ballroom Dancing	9 Pastor's Sabbath 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 5:30 PM-SLLC Meeting	10 10:30 AM-Riverglen Service 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 5:00 PM-Property Committee 7:00 PM-AI Anon/Ladies Parlor	11 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 1:30 PM-Ladies Society 5:00 PM-Finance Meeting 6:30 PM-Choir Rehearsal 8:00 PM-Weds. Night AA	12 7:00 AM-Ladies Ecumenical Breakfast 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 6:30 PM-Christian Ed Meeting	13 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall ANNUAL REPORTS DUE Boy Scout Weekend	14 8:00 AM-Men's Breakfast @Lofgren's 7:30 PM-AA - Fellowship Hall Boy Scout Weekend
15 9:00 AM-Adult Bible study 10:00 AM-Sunday Worship & Sunday School 11:15 AM-Coffee Fellowship followed by PSALMS BIBLE STUDY 7:00 PM-Ballroom Dancing	16 Pastor's Sabbath 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 7:00 PM-NCSC Meeting	17 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 6:30 PM-Council Meeting 7:00 PM-AI Anon/Ladies Parlor	18 10:00 AM-Clergy Group/Ladies Parlor 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 6:30 PM-Choir Rehearsal 8:00 PM-Weds. Night AA	19 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	20 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	21 7:30 PM-AA - Fellowship Hall
22 9:00 AM-Adult Bible study 10:00 AM-Sunday Worship & Sunday School 11:15 AM-Coffee Fellowship followed by PSALMS BIBLE STUDY 7:00 PM-Ballroom Dancing	23 Pastor's Sabbath 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	24 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 7:00 PM-AI Anon/Ladies Parlor	25 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 6:30 PM-Choir Rehearsal 8:00 PM-Weds. Night AA	26 8:00 AM-Ladies Ecumenical Breakfast 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	27 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	28 7:30 PM-AA - Fellowship Hall
29 9:00 AM-Adult Bible study 10:00 AM-Sunday Worship & Sunday School/Food Collection 11:15 AM-Coffee Fellowship followed by PSALMS BIBLE STUDY 7:00 PM-Ballroom Dancing	30 Pastor's Sabbath 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	31 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 7:00 PM-AI Anon/Ladies Parlor		REMEMBER TO COME TO THE ANNUAL MEETING FEBRUARY 5TH WITH POT LUCK LUNCH TO FOLLOW		

“Vision without action is a dream. Action without vision is simply passing the time. Action with Vision is making a positive difference.” Joel Barker

Pork Supper Fund Raiser

In partnership with the Friends of the Grafton County Drug Court, the church will host a fundraising roast pork supper on Saturday, February 18, 2012 in the church fellowship hall. There will be one seating at 5:30 PM. The menu will feature herb-roasted pork loin, garlic mashed potatoes, peas, homemade applesauce, coleslaw, rolls, beverages and an assortment of cakes and pies for dessert. The cost is \$10.00 for teens and adults and \$5.00 for children 5-12. Children under 5 are free. Take-out and delivery within Littleton will be available. Tickets may be purchased and seats may be reserved by contacting the church office at 444-3376.

Fifty percent of the net proceeds of the supper will be donated to the Friends of the Grafton County Drug Court, and the remaining fifty percent will be used for budgeted mission activities of the church.

The Friends of the Grafton County Drug Court is a non-profit charitable foundation established to provide supplemental financial support for the Grafton County Drug Court Sentencing Program.

The Grafton County Drug Court, established in 2007, is a designed to provide outpatient treatment and counseling, intensive supervision, court appearances and random testing for substance abuse to non-violent adult criminal offenders whose crime is somehow drug-related. Defendants accepted into the program plead guilty to one or more new criminal offenses or probation violations and receive a state prison sentence which is suspended pending successful participation in the 18-24 month drug court program. Upon completion, participants may petition the superior court to set aside their conviction and sentence and may ultimately petition for annulment of the record of conviction and sentence. Participants who fail to satisfactorily complete the program are required to serve out their alternative state prison sentence.

Operational funding for the drug court - primarily the cost of treatment and staffing expenses - comes from funds appropriated by the Grafton County legislative delegation and the county commissioners. Funds raised by the Friends of the Grafton County Drug Court augment county funding by providing participant rewards and incentives, making possible modest grants and loans to assist participants in meeting basic needs, and supporting other programs and projects for which governmental funding is unavailable.

Volunteers are needed for a variety of tasks associated with the supper, and donations of cakes, pies and rolls are requested. A sign-up sheet will be posted no later than Sunday, January 15.

For additional information about the pork supper, the "Friends" organization or the Grafton County Drug Court, please contact Bob Muh at 444-5228.

Scenes from Christmas Eve



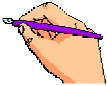

As we celebrate the Word made flesh, let's make it personal. Here is a simple prayer:

Jesus, light of the world, please come into my heart today.

Acts 2:42

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the breaking of bread, and the prayers."

“Classifieds and Notices”

<p>The Roast Pork Supper is February 18th</p> <p>Please sign up to help or to bake pies or cakes. The sign up sheet is outside the church office week days and in the front of the church on Sundays. Call Bob Muh at 444-5228 for more information</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*****</p> <p style="text-align: center;">See article page 3</p>	<p>FROM THE MISSION COMMITTEE</p> <p>Thank you to all who donated to the Christmas Fund. A total of \$276.00 was raised to help support active and retired UCC clergy in financial need.</p>	<p>Bible Study classes</p> <p>A reminder</p> <p>THE PSALMS:</p> <p>Pastor David is leading a class on the Psalms that will meet on five Sundays after church: January 15, 22, and 29 and February 12 and 19.</p> <p>THE LORD’S PRAYER:</p> <p>A Lenten Study with Pastor David on Sundays after church from February 26 through April 1.</p> <p>Call the church office to sign up!</p>
<p>Thank you to all our contributors to <i>Steeple Talk</i> this month!</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p>If YOU have an article, story, picture, or a suitable joke you would like to share, or an item that needs attention and would like it in the Steeple Talk newsletter, please forward to Alice Muh at:</p> <p>muhfamily@roadrunner.com</p> <p>Monthly deadlines are usually by the 20th of each month</p>	<p>Please remember to sign up to host Coffee Fellowship or serve as an usher and greeter. Providing hospitality is an important way we make people feel welcome in our church.</p> <p>You can call the church office or find the sign-up sheet in the sanctuary or at coffee fellowship.</p>	<p>Plan ahead:</p> <p>2011 Prepared to Serve will be held Saturday, February 25, 2012</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p><i>Mark your calendar and save this date. This is an awesome day of workshops and worship to inspire and uplift you.</i></p>

Evolve

“In the first book...I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles...” Excerpt from [Acts 1:1-5](#)

Reflection by Quinn G. Caldwell on January 15, 2011

At some point, Disciples turn into Apostles. In today’s passage, Jesus evolves the Disciples into Apostles, readying them to be sent out with a message (see that word “post” in “apostle”? Just like the mail!). I for one am glad they let it happen; if they had chosen not to change, Christianity would have died when they did.

What stage of Christian evolution are you in? Do you go to church, try to live a good life, and leave it at that? Or do you talk with other people about it as well?

For the sake of everyone else in the break room who doesn’t know how sweet faith can be, isn’t it time to stand up to that loud atheist/fundamentalist/whatever at work?

Or do what one member of my church does: she periodically sets her Facebook status to something like, “Can’t wait for church tomorrow! Anybody want to go with and then get brunch after?” You’d be surprised how many take her up on it. Or you could just be sure your FB profile lists your religion and a link to your church. Or you could write a letter to the editor—explicitly as a Christian—on an issue of the day. Or...well, you get the point: be creative.

Do you think Christianity—or your flavor of it—matters enough to be kept alive, or are you happy to let it die with you? If the latter, then enjoy your discipleship. If the former, it’s time to evolve.

Prayer

God, grant me the Holy Spirit so that I might be strong for the sharing of your Word. Amen.

About the Author

Quinn G. Caldwell is Associate Minister of Old South Church in Boston, Massachusetts.

ANNOUNCING the 209th ANNUAL MEETING of the FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF LITTLETON FEBRUARY 5th, 2012

Our church By-Laws in Article IX, Section 3 call for an annual meeting of the congregation on or about the first Sunday in February for the purpose of electing officials and committees, setting the budgets, reporting on the activities of the church in the previous year, and to conduct any other business that would require the vote of the membership.

As members of the First Congregational Church of Littleton, we make a promise in the form of a covenant to God and to each other to *‘walk together as followers of Jesus Christ....to devote ourselves to the study, the practice, and the spread of Christianity. We will endeavor to be loyal to this fellowship; to help one another in the Christian life; according to our ability and opportunity to support the work and attend the meetings of the Church; and in every way to strive to make it a power in the service of God and our community.’*

The annual meeting serves not only to take care of the business of the church, but to remind us of our obligations to this church, our community, to the world, and to God. In fellowship with each other and God, we have the privilege and responsibility to carry out these promises and to guide our congregation in the coming year. Please plan on coming to the annual meeting on February 4th, which start with worship at 10:00 am with the business meeting following in Fellowship Hall. There will be a pot luck lunch after the meeting.

What do you think God is calling us to do?

SO WHAT ABOUT THE MONEY?

You have heard the one about the minister who says to his congregation, “I have good news and bad news. The good news is that we have all the money we need. The bad news is that it is still in your pockets.” That is about where we are for budget planning for next year. Shaving the 2012 budget to bare bones, we still need about \$172,000 to fulfill our mission. On the income side we are about \$12,000 short.

In this economic climate, the Finance Committee has advised us to take less out of the trust funds as they are in danger of being depleted to a dangerously low level. Pledging is down, loose offerings are down. We know times are rough for a lot of folks. However, it takes money to keep our doors open and do what we say we will do according to our mission; to pay our pastor and the support staff; to pay for the electricity, heat, and hot water. It also takes prayer, commitment, courage, perseverance, devotion, and love. We are asking all of you to prayerfully and courageously commit yourself to this Body of Christ with your time, talent, and resources. Pledge if you haven’t yet. Increase your pledge if you can. Volunteer to serve in some capacity when asked.

Be creative. Take a look at our vision statements. We need your help to move forward, loving Jesus and serving God.

Financial Report

AS OF November 30, 2011-
Year to Date

Member support:	\$120,907.30
Other income:	\$19,962.96*
From Trust Funds:	\$ 18,582.74
Total Income:	\$ 159,453
Total Expenses:	\$ 148,550*
Net:	\$ 10,903

*included unbudgeted income and expenses

Our Mission and Vision- moving forward

ANNOUNCING INFORMATIONAL MEETING and REFRESHMENTS JANUARY 8TH- AFTER CHURCH

On January 8th, after church, there will be an opportunity for you to come for refreshments and conversation about what how the mission of the church and these new vision statements can serve to refocus our energies the church and answer the question “God, what is it you want us to do in this time and this place?”

This is a different time and place than it was 10 years ago, 20 years ago, 30 years ago. You may have noticed dwindling numbers of attendees as people cease to find relevance in the way we serve God. We need to make sure we stay connected to our community in ways that make sense to more people so that the Good News can be shared. You are invited to come and ask questions, offer suggestions, and give other input. At the annual meeting you will be asked to ratify the vision statements and perhaps join small groups in making the goals a reality. God is calling you to be part of this vision. How will you answer?

Our Mission Statement:

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 at various stages of their spiritual growth.

God’s Call - Our Vision

- **Vision Statement:** To offer worship that celebrates God’s love and inspires us to bring that love into our daily lives.
Value: Meaningful worship - Expressing our love for God through worship.
Goal: To use a variety of biblically based, theologically sound, and welcoming worship experiences (i.e.: music, dance, drama, preaching styles) designed to engage all generations in praising God.

- **Vision Statement:** To engage people of all ages and at all stages of their spiritual journeys in Christian faith formation.
Value: Faith Formation and growth - Life-long Christian education and faith exploration.
Goal: To provide opportunities for all parishioners to engage in meaningful, faith-based interest groups, activities and/or instruction.

- **Vision Statement:** To serve the community with compassionate hearts carrying the good news to those who need to hear it.
Value: Reaching Out to and Caring for the Community - working to make a positive difference in the lives of residents of the North Country and partnering with other churches and/or organizations to have a stronger impact on the needs of the community.
Goal: To have greater visibility and an identity within the community as a place that cares and helps “the least among us.”

- **Vision Statement:** To be intentional and consistent in our support and care for each other.
Value: Congregational Care (in-reach) - developing and maintaining strong connections with each other and with God by helping to meet the needs of each member of the congregation.
Goal: To develop a strong sense of connection and love within the congregation.

- **Vision Statement:** To be living examples of God’s love as we have come to know it through Jesus Christ.
Value: Witnessing by Our Presence - “You are the light of the world...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5: 14 - 16)
Goal: To have our lives bear witness to our growing faith in everything we say and do.

Shining Lights Learning Center



On December 16th the students and their families and friends thoroughly enjoyed their Christmas Pageant and pasta dinner (provided by the Bromleys- THANK YOU!). The fund raiser dinner and raffle were a success! We raised a lot of money that will be used to offset expenses of SLLC. The kids, teachers, and parents had an amazing time. It was a great way to celebrate the season.

Every week in the preschool the children have a share day. It's a great way to increase language skills and it also fosters independence. The kids seem to love both sharing and seeing what their friends share.

In the parking lot you can see our new shed for the storage of strollers and out of season equipment. Thank you Bob Iles and Greg Winn for making this happen.

Our numbers are up in the preschool but there is still room for more toddlers. Spread the word!

Thank you to our church family for your prayers and support. SLLC would not be possible without them. We wish all of you a very happy and prosperous New Year from all of us at Shining Lights.

A Prayer for January

Your steadfast love endures from age to age, O living God, for in Christ you tenderly care for your people. Instruct us in your way of humble service, that we may imitate his saving deeds who humbled himself for our salvation and is now exalted with you in splendor for ever and ever. Amen.

UCC.ORG DAILY SEEDS



Epic Center Update

The Epic Center: Epic Church has been exhaustively searching for a new place to call home and fulfill the next phase of our development. As of this letter we only have 21 more Sundays until we lose the use of the Banana Factory for Sunday morning worship gatherings. Time is of the essence. We have been searching high and low (even in some other towns and cities) for a place that will accommodate our growing congregation (especially our kids). Last week we made an offer on a building with some strong potential. Yesterday we received a counter offer. As we proceed with negotiations, please pray that that Epic will find favor with the seller and that God will work out his plan for a sustainable ministry center that would multiply our ministry. Also pray that God will provide the capital needed to purchase and renovate the building. Our total goal for the project is \$450,000.00.

Epic Staff: As part of the Epic Center project, we are actively raising support for me to fill my role as a pastor at Epic in a full time capacity. This is sorely needed as the logistics for the Epic Center are a full time responsibility for my co-pastor, Rob Schlegel. At this point we are 3/5 of the way towards enabling me to work full time for this year. This means that I will be able to work for Epic three days a week until the remainder of the support is raised. We're looking for partners who are willing to contribute \$20 to \$50 a month for a year to provide the support that we need to grow Epic church to the next level.

Epic Updates: We invite you to sign up for e-mail, or snail-mail for Epic updates with the latest news, celebrations, and prayer requests. Feel free to call or e-mail to sign up or to ask questions about what we're doing, or check out our website as well. We can also be found on Facebook.

Thank you all for your continued prayer and support,

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STEEPLE TALK

JANUARY 2012



Steeple Talk

A newsletter of the
First Congregational
Church of Littleton

A New Year's Resolution:

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Church Staff

Pastor: Rev. W. David Weddington
Administrative Assistant: Pat Whipple
Organist & Choir Director: Dottie Morton

Officers

Moderator: Alice Muh
Vice Moderator: Tina Peabody
Treasurer: Marti Faulkner
Assistant Treasurer: Dudley Bailey
Financial Secretary: Joyce Krill

Committee Chairs

Christian Education: Linda Warden
Deacons: Ann Craxton
Finance & Stewardship: Dudley Bailey
Mission: Bob Muh
Music: Tina Peabody
Personnel Relations: Judy Warden
Property Management: Art Hunt
Trustee of the Trust Funds: Dick Holland

Shining Lights Learning Center

Board Chairperson: Suzanne Schott
Director: Dianah Hale

Oh Dear Lord,
These three things I pray:
To see thee more clearly,
Love thee more dearly,
Follow thee more nearly
day by day.

From Godspell, a musical by Stephen Schwartz & John Michael Tebelak