

- Feb 2- SuperBOWLing
- Feb 2- Deadline for Lenten Devotionals
- Feb 3- 6:30 Education Mtg
- Feb 4- 6:30 Membership Mtg
- Feb 5- 6:30 Outreach
- Feb 9- CAT review
- Feb 11-6:30 Property/Finance
- Feb 12- 6:30 Deacons Mtg
- Feb 13- noon & 6:00 Book Club
- Feb 13- 5:30 Stewardship Mtg
- Feb 15- 5:30 Winter Celebration
- Feb 16- 11:00 Adult Formation
- Feb 16- 11:15 Taylor Ledgeview Service
- Feb 18- Worship/Music Mtg
- Feb 19- 6:30 Council Mtg
- Feb 22- 9-3:30 Prepared to Serve
- Feb 26- 7:00 Ash Wednesday Service



There is an opening for altar flowers for Sunday, February 23.

Call Diane Wells if you would like to reserve that date 603.527.1401

Hand Bell practice meets at 10:45 a.m. after Sunday worship

Stitches of Love meets every Tuesday at 7:00 p.m.

Choir practice meets every Thursday at 7:00 p.m.

Tower Tidings



Congregational Church of Laconia, UCC

February 2020

Pastor's Letter

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Jeremiah 29:11

Dear Friends,

If you attended our congregation's Annual meeting this year you know it was a bit of a marathon. (Over 2 hours.) There was much to discuss for there are some very significant matters before this congregation, matters that will define its future. While there were many impassioned and varied opinions expressed at the Annual Meeting what I heard behind every one of them was a love for this church and the mission it is about or could be about in the future.

This congregation is in a time of transition that one might say came to the forefront with the retirement of Rev. Bouton. But it didn't really end with the close of Rev. Koonz, the interim pastor's time with you. Like all organizations during times of transi-

tion one quality we will need is patience and forgiveness. And this is something the church should be better at because we are not just like other organizations! For at the heart of our message, the gospel, God through Christ is offering forgiveness and as many chances as we need to find our way. We may not always see the next step(s) the same way as each other, but I believe God's nature is to be forgiving and patient with our attempts at navigating through this new cultural landscape where the church no longer holds a position of privilege or authority as it may once have. As we learned from the book *Canoeing the Mountains*, no one really knows what the future church will look like, we can only move into the future trusting that God is there and will have mission work for our congregation to be doing there.

Our Church Leadership for the 21st Century team has been wrestling with such matters over the past year through

seminars and workshops with other churches and meeting as a team. They will be reporting on all this and challenging this congregation to be bold in our steps and patient with each other when we find ourselves stumbling along.

As the prophet Jeremiah reminds us, God knows God's plans for us, and they are for the ministry of this congregation to prosper. Trusting this, putting our faith in this, let us move forward experimenting with new ideas, dreaming new visions, knowing that not every idea will work but learning from both our successes and our failures. I encourage you to take the next step(s) holding on to hope as a trusty hiking staff to help us make our way across this cultural boulder field into the future.

Yours in service to Christ and his people,

Pastor Neil Wilson



WINTER CELEBRATION

Submitted by Ila Mattila & Ruth Gill

Come join the fun at the annual winter celebration.

Date: Saturday, February 15 at 5:30 p.m.

Place: Church Hall

Food: Potluck Dinner (where people bring their favorite dishes to share!)

Fun! Food! Fellowship!

Yankee swap - bring a wrapped gift, maybe a nice "re-gift", or something you have that someone else might appreciate more than you! (or an arti



fact from past events!)

The best part is the enjoyment of a meal together, and everyone trying to figure out exactly what you just opened during the Yankee Swap, and how to hang on to it if you like it!

This is a great opportunity to invite friends to join you in this fun evening. Sign-ups are available after worship on Sunday. For more information, call Ruth Gill 528 – 6608, or Ila Mattila 527 – 9476. Hope to see you there!

Rev. Gordon Rankin is our NH Conference Minister. He published the article below in the NH Conference Weekly News in January. This article gives the NH churches a glimpse into Rev. Rankin's heart. Submitted by Pastor Paula

Being Always Angry

This is a reflection I wrote the New Hampshire Conference's Weekly News today

[I have been working on this reflection for several weeks. It seems that, during the time when we remember the legacy of Dr. King, it is the right time to share it with the broader community.

– Gordon]

There is a piece of dialogue in the original Avengers movie that long perplexed me. During the movie there is an ongoing wonderment about how Bruce Banner had learned to manage his anger and not uncontrollably turn into the raging Hulk. During the Battle of New York, the Avengers need the might of the Hulk and urge Banner to transform. In response, Banner says, "You want to know my secret? I am always angry."

For a long time, the idea of being "always angry" made no sense to me. If I am totally honest, I am not one who does anger a lot. Sure, I can get frustrated or upset. But as far as having that anger that just sits in your gut and churns, that's not me. Or at least it wasn't.

It was my time working with our Lakota siblings that taught me the gift of anger. As I mourned with the Lakota community in remembrance of the several hundred men, women and children who were slaughtered by the first automatic rifles at Wounded Knee for dancing, my anger would stir. (By the way, the United States gave out more Medals of Honor for Wounded Knee than any other single battle in history.) As I learned about the impact of the Doctrine of Discovery (a church decree in support of colonization that later became United States law) and how our government has never in its history honored a treaty made with the Lakota people, my anger grew. As I stood with Water Protectors at Standing Rock clearly seeing the snipers that the militarized police had in place on the hills around us, it became clear that the Doctrine of Discovery has a profound impact today and is not just a story from history. Anger became real to me in a new way.

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It is always clear to me that my Lakota friends carried this sense of anger around with them all the time. And why wouldn't they? They have been slaughtered, dehumanized, lied to, betrayed, and relegated to some of the most inhospitable land there is. This happened not just throughout history but even during their lifetimes. How can there be a more appropriate response than anger?

I learned from my Lakota siblings that if I was to truly walk with them, to fully share human connection, to be an ally, that I needed to accept that the anger I felt would always be with me. And it is.

In November, I joined many of my Conference Minister colleagues in visiting Montgomery, Birmingham and Selma, Alabama. I found my anger there as well. I was a college history major. I knew all the stories. But I hadn't connected with the anger before. I'd like to be able to say this was because I was trained to be historically analytical. But I know in the depth of my soul that the truth is that I was protected from such feelings by my whiteness. Yet during this journey with trusted colleagues, there were these pieces of what we experienced that pierced my protections.

I knew the stories of lynchings. I would have told you with conviction that such acts were reprehensible. But there was something about learning that lynchings were such public festivals that people would take photos to make them into postcards that pierced through and made me angry. During our visit to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, reading all the names of people who had been lynched broke my heart. But it wasn't until I read the names of those who were lynched in the county where I went to college that I really connected with my anger. I knew quite well of the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church, but it was the small detail that the four girls who were killed were in the bathroom getting ready to lead a Youth Sunday worship service that freed my anger for good. Since my return from Alabama, I find myself always angry.

In our conversations about racism, too often reconciliation gets defined as working towards forgiving and moving on. Let me be clear: that's a fable of white privilege. Anger is the appropriate response to the destructive evil of racism. Privilege encourages us to ignore this truth. But faith, I have come to believe, asks us to join our siblings of color in their anger.

I now know the experience of being always angry. And I think it has made me a more faithful person.



Coffee Hour SuperBOWL!

Join the Faith Formation group this Sunday, February 2 as we play a SuperBOWLING game. This is a fun way to emphasize that LOVE "knocks out" hate, bullying, prejudice etc. And if you try hard you can knock out 10 major issues in one turn! Join us for the fun!!

From the Moderator



Warm greetings to each of you. I feel so privileged and honored to have “recaptured” the Moderator’s gavel. It is a job I really enjoy, mostly because I get to work closely with our excellent staff, and get to put heads together with our wonderful clergy.

I will not kill you with info, going forward, but do promise a note once per month in the Tidings just to try to make sure some of the “stuff” Council is doing gets out to everyone. Our single most important topic will be “budget”. We are so reliant on our endowment just to meet our operational budget it has become a significant concern we must resolve sooner rather than later. We must grow/preserve our endowment to ensure we can survive a major downturn in the market. We have three ways of doing that;

- by adding to it (think memorial or end-of-life gifts)
- by reducing our take from it (think being closer to having a balanced operational budget)
- by praying like heck for continued market growth.

I am proactive by nature, and with our church leadership will ensure we keep you up to speed on how we as a church are doing, and will always explore options we have if we begin to slip at all. I will work closely with Property & Finance to ensure we explore our options as a Congregation and make sound financial decisions for our future. Finally, we will continue budgetary briefings approximately quarterly (April, September, January, Council willing). A well-informed Congregation eliminates surprises and makes the potentially tough decisions ahead a bit easier to deal with.

I feel I also must comment on our Annual Meeting’s budget/financial discussions. In my mind, it was overdue, and I feel so good about the numbers of folks who came away from that meeting with a much clearer picture of our finances. Our church’s survival is the issue, and we ALL have a stake in it.

I look forward to our months ahead, and the pleasure in working closely with Pastors Neil & Paula.

And again, in closing, our 4 “former” Officers who did their jobs admirably; Sue Smith, Kathy Giovanni, Pat Wood, and Tammy Emond **THANK YOU!!** And to our Officers staying on Don Clarke and Ashley Codrington thank you.

Blessings to each of you, and your families,
John Walker
Moderator

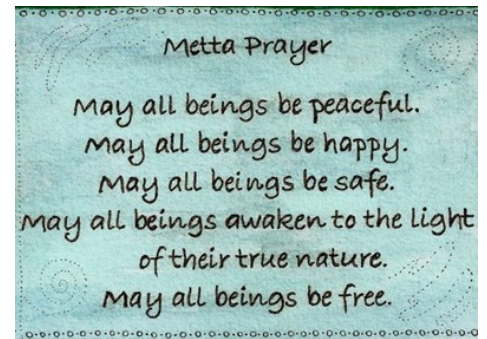
A Note from Paula

Some of you may have heard that Bill and I are going to be going on a five day silent retreat in March. We are a little anxious about it so we have started to explore and learn different meditation practices. I think what is the most unsettling is that we can’t read, write, have our computers or our phones while we are there (5 days!). Reading and writing are considered distractions to learning ‘mindfulness’. We will not be staying together or interacting with each other. We are to be silent all except one or two group meetings where we can ask questions. We are welcome to attend lectures - but not interact.

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I want to share with you a practice I came across that is pretty awesome. It's called Metta meditation or LovingKindness Meditation. It is a meditation where you focus on unconditional love for yourself and others without expectations. During the time you meditate, you focus on sending yourself and others thoughts of care, concern and love. (There are several ways for this practice - this is the one I'm exploring) Here is a brief description:



When ready, (you can close your eyes if you wish) begin with yourself, identify three or four wishes or desires for well being that you want for yourself. For example:

- ~ May I be filled with peace
- ~ May I be happy
- ~ May I be healthy and strong.

(You can adapt the phrases as you see fit), You can either speak the words out loud or in your mind for whatever length of time is comfortable - don't go through this quickly take your time and send loving kindness to yourself.

- ◆ Then imagine someone you care about, someone you're grateful for, and simply wish them well with these same words - substituting their name where it was "I".
- ◆ Then imagine someone you feel neutral about - maybe it's the store clerk or a person you saw on TV - someone who asked for prayer in church - send them your loving kindness thoughts
- ◆ Then imagine someone you have difficulty with, someone who may rub you the wrong way or the terrible waiter you just had. Send them your loving kindness thoughts.
- ◆ Finally extend your well wishes of loving kindness to the world.
 - ~ May all of humanity be filled with peace
 - ~ May all of humanity be happy
 - ~ May all of humanity be healthy and strong.

Notice any feelings that arise during the practice but don't invite or reject them. Gently return to repeating the phrases when this happens. Stay with each person (including yourself) for a sustained amount of time that feels comfortable for you. You might have very strong feelings if you imagine someone you care about who is in distress, or someone you dislike intensely, or a situation you have no personal contact with but which touches your heart. Let the feelings come and go naturally, without clinging to or judging them, or judging yourself for having them. Allow yourself to feel the warm-heartedness that accompanies metta meditation. Relax into it.

I found an App for my phone titled [Ten Percent Happier - Meditation & Sleep](#). It's a free App that I've started to learn from. The lead teacher, Joseph Goldstein is the founder of the retreat center we are going to in Massachusetts. You may want to explore it.

I'll share more after our retreat in March! Send Bill and I good thoughts March 5th - 10th!

- ~ May You be filled with peace.
- ~ May You be happy.
- ~ May You be healthy and strong. Amen

A Note From the Austins

Dear Friends and Family of Cathie Austin,
It's been a while since we've posted an update on Cathie's progress. Thanks to your generous support last year as well as helping hands and positive thoughts, Cathie was able to return home safely from Grenada where she suffered a severe and life-debilitating stroke in April 2019, and then launch a long journey of healing and recovery at home with her family. The funds previously raised helped transport Cathie from Grenada to Florida for emergency and stabilizing medical care, and then transfer her to New Hampshire for continued treatment and rehabilitation. It also financially helped keep Cathie, Stephen, and Nick in their home while Cathie gained strength and began her recovery.

Over the last 8 months, Cathie has undergone hundreds of hours of physical, occupational, and speech therapies. The therapies have helped her in some areas more so than others. She has progressed from non-mobile, to walking with assistance, to walking un-assisted. She takes walks and can do some light household chores and basic self-care. Cathie remains unable, however, to engage in many of the day-to-day activities of a "normal" life, such as work, mom-duties, cooking, reading, speaking, driving, and so many other things we do without a second thought. Her illness has also been very isolating for her. She has not regained much of her speech capacity, cannot write, and continues to suffer cognitive challenges. Because of her severe and permanent disability, Cathie is no longer able to work and was terminated from her employment as a speech pathologist at LRGH last fall. Despite these challenges, Cathie remains hopeful and determined to regain more of her motor and speech skills and return to the productive and active life she led before her stroke.

And here's where things get interesting. A physician at a U.S. neurological medical center that was recently featured on "60 Minutes" has successfully treated stroke patients by using an anti-

inflammatory medication typically used to treat rheumatoid arthritis.

The physician discovered that, administered appropriately to stroke patients, the treatment can reopen parts of the brain that had become dormant as a result of stroke. While there is no guarantee that this treatment will work for Cathie – 80% of patients treated report at least some level of improvement, and a small portion of that group reports vast changes – Cathie seems to fall into the sweet spot of treatable candidates. The treatment is considered "off-label" since it's an approved arthritis and not stroke therapy (it's not experimental or trial). Because it's not yet approved as a traditional stroke therapy by the FDA, it also is not covered by Cathie and Steve's health insurance. It involves 2 pricey injections of \$7,600 each as well as a travel to and from and a 1-week medical stay at the medical center.

Cathie and Stephen have considered this treatment option thoroughly and Cathie wants to go for it. She and Stephen had a telephone consultation with the medical facility, and not only did they determine that Cathie would be eligible, but that she would be an excellent candidate who stands a very good chance for improvement. Funds dependent, Cathie can go as soon as she can afford the treatment.

Sincerely,
The Austins

Cathie, Stephen, and Nick need our help. We would like to provide help from the church through the Dorcus fund. If anyone would like to contribute to the \$19,000 the family needs to raise for Cathie's treatment, please make a check out to the Dorcus Fund with "Cathie" in the memo line.

*Blessings,
Pastor Neil and Pastor Paula*

Adult Faith Formation

Sunday February 16 11am -12pm

Outreach will host Rev. Dr. Dawn C. Berry for a presentation and discussion about racial justice.

In October 2018, the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ unanimously adopted the *Resolution of Christian Witness in Support of NHCUCC Congregations Awakening to Racial Justice* without discussion. It was adopted because it was considered the right thing for churches to do, but why the silence? As a predominantly white state and members of predominantly white congregations, could the silence have come from our thinking racism is a problem in southern states and big cities, not a problem in NH? The Racial Justice Mission Group (RJMG) of the NH Conference believes that our congregations are in a crucial position to wake up to the reality of white privilege in our churches and communities, and to look more deeply into the racism embedded in the history of NH. We need to ask ourselves: what do we need to learn in order to understand racism in our society? Why are there

not more people of color in the state and in our congregations? And then, what can we do about it? In our hour together, we will explore what we mean about race, white privilege, and how to become a Racial Justice Church.



The Rev. Dr. Dawn Berry retired from Brookside Congregational Church, UCC in 2015 after 30 plus years of pastoral ministry. She served three churches in NH and one in the ME Conference. She is the chairperson and one of the four founders of the Racial Justice Mission Group of the NHCUCC and has been accepted to the Sacred Conversations to End Racism Facilitator Training for 2020 at the national setting. She is a member of the First Congregational Church, UCC of Hopkinton where she is the co-coordinator of the church's Family Promise program and is with the infants and toddlers every other week in the nursery. She and Greg, her husband of 50 years, like to travel with the travel trailer and little dog Tinkerbelle. They had one son, Nathan.

21st Century Church Update:

Your Creating and Leading the 21st Century Church (CL21) team invites you to come take a look at a snapshot of the church! On February 9th, we will gather at Coffee Hour for a close look at who we ourselves said we are as interpreted by the Congregational Assessment Tool--the CAT--that many of us took last spring. A snapshot can only capture a single moment in time, but it's a real moment in our history as a church. We won't bore you with the details, but will share some of the bigger take-aways:

- Who actually took the survey?
- What's our overall satisfaction?
- ...and our overall energy?
- Are members attending worship more or less than 3 years ago?
- How many of us value church activities beyond worship?
- What are our top three priorities for the church?
- How can the style of our church be characterized?
- How central is faith to our lives?
- How equipped do we feel to participate in ministries that may be calling us?
- How many of us are "on the fence"? What might that mean?



We hope that by better understanding who we are and what we value as servants of God, we will be able to clarify our mission moving forward into the 21st Century. What is God calling us to do as a church *now*? Please join us on February 9th to learn more.

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best.... Philippians 1: 9-10a

Prepared to Serve: A Training Event for All of God's People



February 22, 2020
Pembroke Academy
Pembroke, NH

This day of workshops is open to all. The cost is \$40 per person. There are 60 different workshops spread out over four blocks of time throughout the day. If interested in attending or looking for more information, contact Pastor Neil neil@laconiaucc.org or Paula paula@laconiaucc.org 603-524-0668 for a brochure.



The Lenten Devotional

Journey through the days of Lent with these original devotionals, written and presented by our very own Congregational Church of Laconia members!

Be sure to pick one of these up on Sunday February 22, 2020! Also be looking for a display of some original pieces of art by our members as well!

Ash Wednesday Service February 26, 2020 7:00 p.m. This service will take place in the sanctuary. There will be the option for participants to receive the mark of the ashes.

Lenten Soup & Study Series Thursdays March 5, 12, 19, 26. At 5:30 p.m.

This year's theme will be on "Forgiveness". These sessions will be led by Pastors Neil & Paula and Derek Waldron our Pastoral Intern. A simple meal of various soups will be provided by the Board of Diaconate so come and find growth in faith and fellowship!

Lenten Organ Recital

This longstanding tradition here at CCL, will be held on Friday noon April 3, 2020 Our guest musician this year is George Bozeman, the organist of the Pembroke Congregational Church UCC who recently performed on the restored pipe organ at Canterbury Village. (Restored by our very own Bob Bengtson!)

Maundy Thursday Service April 6, 2020 5:30 p.m. This will be a service around the tables in the Church hall

April 7, 2020 Good Friday service of Readings and Music 7:00 p.m. Congregational Church of Laconia Sanctuary.

The Good Friday Prayer Vigil Be looking for more information on this.



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Feb 1
Mary Hatfield

Feb 2
Justin Piscopo

Feb 4
Barbara Sweetser

Happy February Birthdays

Feb 6
Lorraine Doyon

Feb 8
Claudia Wright
Cindy Guldemon

Feb 10
Gretta Smith

Feb 11
Paul Guldemon

Feb 13
Casey Williams
Garrett Shore

Feb 14
Ruth Stuart

Feb 16
Andrew Mozier

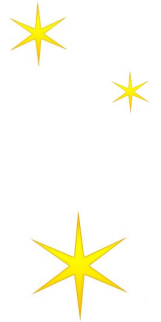
Feb 17
Janet Heslam

Feb 21
Philip Bragg

Feb 22
Mike Muzzey

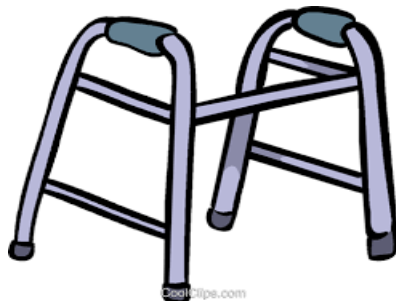
Feb 25
Donna Bertrand

Feb 26
Phyllis MacDonald



*"The secret of change is to
focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old,
but on building the new."*

Socrates



Did you know . . .

. . . that in December the church office received 81 items for the medical lending closet, and lent out over 111 items. That's a lot of visitors to the church office.

The Medical Supply Ministry aka Medical Lending Closet of the Congregational Church of Laconia, UCC is asking for your assistance in restocking our depleted medical lending closet. The items in greatest demand are rollator-walkers, walkers, wheelchairs, canes, commodes, shower benches and chairs, and unopened packages of Depends and pads. If you have items to donate, we would be happy to receive them. A very big thank you!
PS We have an abundance of crutches