



March 2025



Pastor's Perspective

What is Lent?

Lent is the time when Christians prepare for the greatest of the Christian festivals known as Easter by thinking of ways to re-align our worlds with Christ. It is a time for spring-cleaning our lives, and it begins with Ash Wednesday and lasts for six and a half weeks. Lent ends at Easter when Christians remember the death of Jesus and then celebrate his rising from the grave. The last week of Lent starts with Palm Sunday, which celebrates the day Jesus entered Jerusalem and the people lay down palms at his feet.

Why does Lent last for 40 days? Lent is a time when Christians remember the 40 days and nights Jesus spent alone in the desert without food being tempted by the Devil. Jesus used this time to prepare for His work by fasting and praying. Luke's Gospel says: 'Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.' So, as in the Bible, we too have the opportunity to spend forty days of pre-paring ourselves to rejoice in the resurrection of Jesus Christ at Easter.

Have you ever wondered why are Sundays not counted in the 40 days of Lent? Sundays are always a day of celebration in the Christian church and so they cannot be included in the 40 fast days of Lent. Sundays commemorate the resurrection.

I remember from my days back in school that a friend of mine, upon not completing his homework, gave the excuse to the teacher that he "gave it up for Lent." The teacher wasn't buying that and gave him a zero for the assignment. I think we can do much better than my friend during this important season. Let's look into our hearts and ask God what He would have us do during this time. Do you feel the burden to grow closer to Jesus? Are there areas in your life that you would like to give over to God? If this is the case (which it is for most all of us), then now is the time. Commit to growing closer to our Lord this Lenten season and you will see the miracle of the Easter story come alive in your life in a very new way!

Happy Lent!!
Pastor Chris



Gospel Music Sunday

March 2nd at 10 am

Join us for a celebratory service featuring Gospel music at the First Congregational Church in Manchester, NH on **Sunday, March 2nd, 2025** during the 10 am service. Come and hear spiritual songs, gospel organ selections, and a special arrangement of the Hallelujah Chorus featuring the adult vocal choir, percussionist Leo LeBlanc, and soloist Bridget Thornton-Smith. Join us in-person or via live stream as we celebrate the gift of music in an uplifting worship experience.

Ash Wednesday Worship Service

March 5th, 2025

Held at 9:00 am in the Chapel

Upcoming Membership Events!

New Member Orientation

Sunday, March 30th following the
Worship Service

New Member Joining

Sunday, April 6th at 10 am

If you are interested in membership at FCC, please reach out to Ellie Stetson at Ebsetson@aol.com.



Senior Moments

With Rev. Barbara Papagian

March is known as a windy month, although we sure have had a lot of wind in January and February. I don't like wind very much.

When I was younger and wearing hats they were always blowing off my head, or paper I was holding blew out of my hands. One day last week, one of our empty trash cans was blowing up the street and I had to go chasing after it. Well, probably chasing is not the right word, more like hobbling as fast as I could with my cane in my hand. I was quite upset that people driving by did not stop to help me. Did they think my cane was a weapon? I guess it would make a good one. Eventually the trash can stopped and I hobbled back to my house, can in tow. I went into the house and my daughter-in-law yelled at me for trying to run. All in all it was a frustrating afternoon so I took a nap, thinking of bad words I could say to the wind.

Ecclesiastes says; "I saw all the deeds that are done under the sun; and see, all is vanity and a chasing after wind." One commentary I read said that this means that "human efforts are futile and unsatisfactory and the phrase, "chasing the wind" is a metaphor that conveys a sense of hopelessness. I did capture the trash can but I sure felt hopeless when no one stopped to help and Autumn scolded me.



King Solomon coined that phrase, "chasing the wind." If people do not acknowledge God as the sovereign one, then life is empty and will be like one chasing the wind.

One commentator wrote that when a person views his life experiences from God's perspective, their futile life outlook will be reversed and instead of chasing the wind, they will find enjoyment.

Well dear King Solomon, that is very interesting, but I did not find enjoyment in chasing my trash can up the street and I am still frustrated.

Rev. Barbara Papagian

Kindness Team News!

Seen here is the "thank you" and a bag from the Kindness Team Valentine outreach!

FCC gave Valentine cookie bags to ENA students (immigrants). We also "thanked" the staff with cookie bags! The bags included Valentine kisses!

48 in total were given for the holiday! **So, we NEED cookies now!!! Thanks in advance!**



March Committee Meetings

- Sunday, March 2 at 11:15AM—Deacons
- Tuesday, March 4 at 6:30PM—Membership
- Sunday, March 9 at 11:15AM—Annual Meeting
- Monday, March 10 at 9:30AM—Sr. Fellowship
- Tuesday, March 11 at 6PM—Church Council
- Sunday, March 16 at 11:30AM—Open & Affirming
- Sunday, March 16 at 4PM—Stewardship (Zoom)
- Monday, March 17 at 6:30PM—Trustees
- Open & Affirming and Outreach Committee Meetings in March to be announced...

⇒ If you do not see your meeting listed here, please reach out to Lauren in the church office—thank you!

⇒ Please confirm the location of your meeting with committee chairs especially during the winter months.

March Worship Schedule

Sunday, March 2nd 10:00 AM

Transfiguration Sunday

Gospel Music Sunday

Sunday Friends

Chapel Communion Service following Worship

Wednesday, March 5th 9:00 AM

Ash Wednesday Worship Service

Sunday, March 9th 10:00 AM

First Sunday in Lent

Scout Sunday

Sacrament of Communion

Sunday Friends

Annual Meeting following Worship Service

(No Fellowship Hour)

Sunday, March 16th 10:00 AM

Second Sunday in Lent

Sunday, March 23rd 10:00 AM

Third Sunday in Lent

Horton Center Sunday

Rev. Barbara Papagian Leads Worship

Sunday Friends

Sunday, March 30th 10:00 AM

Fourth Sunday in Lent

Sunday Friends

Volunteer Opportunities at FCC!

***** Volunteers make a difference! *****

Here at FCC we try to help those around us both in our church family, and the wider community.

Starting in March, we are making some changes... a new place to sign up... a calendar for the month's volunteering opportunities... with better messaging, so you know what each volunteer opportunity requires of you... pictures to show as we work in the community and contact information of who to call with questions, or to sign you up if you are unable to make it to church on a Sunday.

The New Volunteer sign-up board will be in the hall between the Sanctuary and Parlor, opposite the Food Pantry Closet—come check it out!

Why change?????? ... It just makes sense that the more volunteers we have the more people we can reach. The space outside of the office gets so crowded after church that it's not always possible to wait for a space to look at all the different sign up sheets. All the visitors to our building during the week ... teachers, students, musicians, people attending meetings, and contractors all will be able to see at a glance what we do.

Volunteers do make a difference, helping people feel the love of God through our work.




Help serve the evening meal at Families in Transition (FIT) from 4:30 to 5:45 pm
Held at the FIT Adult Emergency Shelter at 199 Manchester Street. **Upcoming dates include Tues., March 11th, Weds., March 19th & Fri., March 28th.** Put your name on the sign-up sheet on the new volunteer sign-up board.




Join FCC Volunteers at the FIT Food Pantry: Tuesday, March 25th from 1—3pm.
We sort donations and stock shelves and help wherever needed—just 2 hours of your time to help the food insecure in Manchester. Please see the sign-up sheet on the new volunteer sign-up board.




FIT Family Center: Thurs., March 20th from 6—7pm.
Do crafts with kids (ages 5 to 12 years) while parents are preparing their dinners in the kitchen. See the sign-up sheet on the new volunteer sign-up board.




Resilience Reins at UpReach Therapeutic Riding Center
Upcoming dates include April 3rd, May 7th and June 18th.
We serve and provide dinner for the families of this wonderful program. Watch the volunteer board for sign-up sheet coming soon.



New England Seafarers Mission Event: Saturday, May 31st—time to be announced.
Volunteers will help to price items, stock the shelves, and run the cash registers at a busy crew market. Or help in the mailroom. More upcoming 2025 NEMM volunteer dates include: 7/19, 8/25 and 9/22.




Join Coach Bill Jones as a Young Athletes volunteer coach on Mondays from 5:30-6:30pm at the Manchester Music School!
For this opportunity, please contact Coach Bill via cell or email: 603-860-1236 or wjones0615@comcast.net.



Conversation Cafe's with the ENA Program: Evening Conversation on Monday, March 17th at 6:30 pm & Morning Conversation Tuesday, March 18th at 10:45 am. Volunteers provide conversation, laughter, connection and encouragement for the students. Sign up on the church office window to join us!



Volunteers are needed to assist with the FCC Community Food Pantry by serving our visitors twice per week on Mondays from 9-12 and Thursdays from 12-3 at FCC.
Please sign up on the new volunteer sign-up board.



If you have questions on any of these volunteer opportunities or would like to sign up, speak to Lauren in the office Mon-Friday or contact Liz Verity, Volunteer Coordinator, at liz-v@comcast.net, call or text to 603-494-6785.



News From FCC Outreach March 2025



FCC Food Pantry News!

Our March Donation food for the FCC Community Food Pantry will be **beans and rice!** Canned or dry beans and dry rice in boxes or bagged (and/or pasta too).

Thanks so much for your support!

We welcome volunteers to assist with the Food Pantry by serving our visitors



twice per week on Mondays from 9-12 and Thursdays from 12-3 at FCC. Please sign up on the office Window—thank you!



One Great Hour OF SHARING

Sunday, March 30th, 2025

Be the Light...

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is a vital special mission offering of the United Church of Christ. It connects you to disaster relief, refugee assistance, and development efforts around the globe. When disasters strike, or when individuals are displaced due to violence or poverty, OGHS ensures immediate response and ongoing recovery. Through your support, OGHS funds comprehensive development programs in areas such as healthcare, education, agriculture, food security, microfinancing, and women's empowerment. By partnering with Global Ministries and international response networks, OGHS maximizes its impact. Your contributions help meet urgent needs while addressing the root causes of vulnerability, ensuring long-term, sustainable solutions for affected communities. OGHS offering envelopes are available in each pew. Please place into the offering plate on Sunday, March 30th. Thank you for your generosity.



Our Lenten Offering...

Lent is the 40 day period between Ash Wednesday, March 5th, and Easter Sunday, April 20th.

Watch for our annual Lenten letter coming to your mailbox in late February so that you can plan your own offering. On the back of the envelope you can write in your Pledge number, or write your name, so we can report it on your annual giving statement.

We thank you for whatever you are able to do to strengthen the work of our Church!

Open & Affirming Committee March 2025 News and Reflections

At the recent committee meeting, ONA members talked with Pastor Chris about Manchester's Homeless Coalition that meets at our church.

We support the Coalition's work and will begin meeting with and learning how other city faith communities are working with the homeless. **We plan to organize a group from FCC to attend the Homeless Coalition's Training on May 17th, at First United Methodist Church on Valley Street. Save the date.**



Mark your calendars for June 8th, when Manchester Chorale Society will perform the oratorio *Considering Matthew Shepard*.

The ONA Committee will arrange for group purchase of tickets, so that FCC folks can attend the performance together. The musical work aligns with the Matthew Shepard Foundation's efforts to amplify Matthew Shepard's story and inspire others to embrace the dignity and equality of all people.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Manchester

All are Welcome and Wanted
www.firstcongregational.org

In these times of political and societal divisions, members and friends sometimes ask about the purposes of the Open and Affirming Committee. *We are NOT a political group.* Our purposes and efforts are faith-based and inspired by Christ's examples of love and acceptance of those on the margins. We embrace a spirit of hospitality, and want everyone to feel support, welcome, and acceptance at First Congregational Church. Together, we seek to *live out* our welcome in meaningful ways – within our congregation and in service to the community. As an Open and Affirming church, we affirm, accept, and support our gay, lesbian, and trans brothers and sisters, AND those that are homeless, those of other races and ethnic backgrounds, people with disabilities, and others that are part of the rich and diverse fabric of humankind. We'd love to have you join in this ministry. You're invited to attend an upcoming meeting – on Sunday, March 16th at 11:30, and/or on Sunday, April 27th at 11:30.

The Open and Affirming Committee

Jeanine Finefrock, Jeffrey Frye, Karen Hawver, Justin May, and Carol Soucy, Chair.

Women's Connection News—March 2025



On Saturday, February 15th, Women's Connection was able to squeeze in our 13th Annual Valentine's Day Breakfast between snowstorms!

Eighteen ladies arrived with their favorite breakfast foods to share with each other, a Valentine's card and a gift from the Dollar Tree that cost \$1.25. When they arrived they put their gift in a brown lunch bag, sealed it with a heart then placed the bag in a basket to be opened after breakfast. The card went in a Valentine's Day box that was on each table.

When it was time, each of us picked a card out of the box to open and got a Valentine's wish from a special friend.

Barbara Papagian lead us in prayer and we enjoyed our delicious meal. After eating we had a quick business meeting, talking about what events will be happening for the rest of the winter into the spring...



then was passed out to each of them, then put back in the basket. We were now ready to play Valentine's Day Yankee Swap! Everyone got a number and the game began. Elizabeth Robertson got number one, which is the best number to get because after everyone had picked a gift and had opened it, she could go and choose any gift she wanted. As the game went on, number two picked and opened. Number two could keep her gift or swap with number



one. As the numbers got higher, each lady had more of a choice of gifts to swap. When Elizabeth opened her bag and pulled out a Valentine's Day tutu, she immediately put it up to her and then put it on! It looked great on her and it matched her pink outfit. Needless to say Elizabeth could have picked any gift but was not going to give-up that tutu!



Everyone went home with their special brown bag gift. There were four Valentine's flower arrangement for center pieces on the tables.

All the ladies names were put into a box and four names were pulled out to win the center pieces. Nancy Simmons, Ruth Mills, Joan Currier and Liz Verity were the lucky winners! Barbara Brawley went home with the jar of M&M's which was the prize for guessing the



right amount of candies in the jar.

All the food was delicious and the friendship was even better. Great laughs and a great time was had by all. The pictures tell it all!

The Women's Link from the NHCUCC is posted on the bulletin board in the dining room.



The Women's Fellowship Women's World Day of Prayer is on March 7th at 11:30 at the Kensington Congregational church and the spring gathering and annual meeting is Saturday, April 26, 2025 from 9:30 - 3:30 at the United Church of Christ in Keene. Keynote speaker - Reverend Cindy Bailey. Some of you might remember Cindy many years ago here at FCC. There are registration forms tucked under the sign-up sheet on the church office window. Registrations should be mailed in by April 13th with a \$15.00 check to Trudie Bergeron, 46 Nantucket Place, Greenland, NH.

Here is what we have for dates and events as of now:

March 6th- Zoom BINGO at 6:30 pm. Sign-up is on the church office window. Once you sign up you will get the Zoom invite and bingo card by email—fill it out with your own numbers by following the guide on the sheet.

March 16th - Palace Theatre for the 2:00 pm show "Escape to Margaritaville". Sign-up sheet is on the church office window. Only 10 tickets at \$35.00. Sign up soon and pay Nikki Brown or Pam LeBlanc with a check to FCC writing "Palace Theatre" in the memo line.

March 14th - April 6th is "Missy's Closet Prom Dresses and Tuxedos for Teens". There are many times to volunteer. The sign up sheets are on the church office window with dates and times. By signing up, everyone can see who is going and can determine if they might want to car pool. Many ladies volunteered last year and we had a great time helping teens find just-the-right outfit for their proms.

May 17th-Save this date for the 13th Annual Mystery Ride!

May 18th and 25th - We are hosting Coffee Hour.

Once we got the business out of the way we went back to the Dollar Tree gift in the lunch bag! All the ladies were given a medium-sized brown bag, a heart to decorate with

markers, colored pencils, and glue to put cut-out hearts on. They got creative and had fun even though they said that they are not crafty. A heart was glued onto each lunch bag and



THIS MONTH AT FCC

ACTIVITIES, DATES AND TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. PLEASE REFER TO THE PRINTED CALENDARS BY THE OFFICE OR GO TO WWW.FCCMANCHESTERNH.ORG

MARCH

Saturday, March 1st

No Church Activities Scheduled

Sunday, March 2nd—Gospel Sunday

10:00 AM Worship Service & Sunday Friends

11:15 AM Chapel Communion Service

11:15 AM Deacons' Meeting

Monday, March 3rd

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

10:00 AM Staff Meeting

5:30 PM *Special Olympics Young Athletes*

Tuesday, March 4th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

6:30 PM Membership Committee Meeting (Zoom)

Wednesday, March 5th—Ash Wednesday

9:00 AM Ash Wednesday Worship Service

11:00 AM Funeral Service for Nancy McIninch

Thursday, March 6th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

11:00 AM Greater Manchester Clergy Association Meeting w/luncheon (in parlor)

6:30 PM Women's Connection Zoom BINGO

Friday, March 7th

No Church Activities Scheduled

Saturday, March 8th

No Church Activities Scheduled

Sunday, March 9th—First Sunday in Lent

10:00 AM Worship Service, Sacrament of Communion & Sunday Friends

11:15 AM Annual Meeting

Monday, March 10th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

9:30 AM Senior Fellowship Board Meeting

5:30 PM *Special Olympics Young Athletes*

Tuesday, March 11th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

4:30 PM *FIT/New Horizons Kitchen Volunteer Evening*

6:00 PM Church Council Meeting

Wednesday, March 12th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

7:00 PM Chancel Choir

Thursday, March 13th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

9:00 AM Holly Berry Fair Craft Workshop

Friday, March 14th

No Church Activities Scheduled

Saturday, March 15th

No Church Activities Scheduled

Sunday, March 16th—Second Sunday in Lent

10:00 AM Worship Service

11:30 AM Open & Affirming Committee Meeting

2:00 PM *Women's Connection Outing to Palace Theater*

4:00 PM Stewardship Committee Meeting (Zoom)

Monday, March 17th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

5:30 PM *Special Olympics Young Athletes*

6:30 PM Church Trustees' Meeting

6:30 PM ENA Evening Conversation Café

Tuesday, March 18th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

Wednesday, March 19th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

4:30 PM *FIT Kitchen Volunteer Evening*

7:00 PM Chancel Choir

Thursday, March 20th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

9:00 AM Holly Berry Fair Craft Workshop

6:00 PM *FIT Family Center Activity Night*

Friday, March 21st

No Church Activities Scheduled

Saturday, March 22nd

No Church Activities Scheduled

Sunday, March 23rd—Third Sunday in Lent

Horton Center Sunday

10:00 AM Worship Service & Sunday Friends

Monday, March 24th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

5:30 PM *Special Olympics Young Athletes*

Tuesday, March 25th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

1:00 PM *FIT Food Pantry Volunteer Opportunity*

Wednesday, March 26th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

7:00 PM Chancel Choir

Thursday, March 27th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

Friday, March 28th

4:30 PM *FIT Kitchen Volunteer Evening*

Saturday, March 29th

No Church Activities Scheduled

Sunday, March 30th—Fourth Sunday in Lent

10:00 AM Worship Service & Sunday Friends

11:15 AM New Member Orientation

Monday, March 31st

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

5:30 PM *Special Olympics Young Athletes*

Please note the FCC Food Pantry is currently open to the public Monday from 9 am to 12 noon & Thursday 12 noon to 3 pm.



2025 Easter Flowers Order Form

The congregation is invited to provide flowers for Easter, either as a memorial or in honor of someone special. Please fill out this form and return it to the church office. Make checks out to **First Congregational Church** and please write "Easter Flowers" on the Memo line.

Donor: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

In memory of: _____

OR:

In honor of: _____

Preferred flower(s): lily tulip _____

- ⇒ Payment of \$20.00 per lily or \$18.00 per tulip must accompany this order. Please give form with payment to church office.
- ⇒ Plants may be picked up after the Easter service on Sunday, April 20th, 2025.
- ⇒ Final deadline for ordering plants is Sunday, March 30th, 2025.



Children's Ministry News

Bring your family and friends and join us! Sunday Friends, our children & youth program, meets in the rec room after the *Musical Offering* and includes lessons, crafts and games. We can't wait to see you there!



In March we will meet the following Sundays: March 2nd, March 9th, March 23rd and March 30th.

Please note the "Cradle Roll Room" (located just off of the rec room downstairs) is open and staffed by our wonderful volunteers for our youngest visitors as well.

Bible Study News

Rev. Stevens will be offering future bible study session times/modes (Zoom) to accommodate different schedules—please stay tuned for an announcement on upcoming bible study dates!



Reach out with questions to Rev. Stevens via email to: cstevens@FCCManchesterNH.org.

Holly Berry Fair News!

The Holly Berry Fair craft gathering is starting up for our fourth annual fair on October 18, 2025!

Get ready to join in on the fun Thursday morning starting **March 13th from 9:00 to 12:00**. Remember you don't have to have a lot of experience, just come willing to help in anyway possible. We will be meeting every other week on Thursday morning.

Here is the schedule: March 13 & 20, April 3 & 17. On May 1st we will begin meeting every Thursday morning until the fair!



Here are some pictures of the neatly organized Holly Berry Fair Craft Room ready for another year of laughter, fun and craft, craft, craft!



The March 2025 Church Window

Our monthly newsletter

First Congregational Church

508 Union Street
Manchester, NH 03104-4890
(603) 625-5093
www.fccmanchesternh.org

Rev. Christopher Stevens
Senior Pastor

Rev. Barbara Papagian
Associate Pastor

Adam Peithmann
Director of Music Ministry

Daylight Saving Time begins on Sunday, March 9th, 2025!



Don't forget to set your clock an hour ahead before bedtime on Saturday night, March 8th.

The Deadline for the April Church Window Newsletter is Friday, March 14th!



Please submit your articles & pictures to Lauren Henderson at LHenderson@FCCManchesterNH.org



Sunday Worship 10:00 AM

In-person with livestream option available from our homepage
www.FCCManchesterNH.org

2024 Annual Reports & Written Committee Reports are ready!

Financial Reports were mailed to your homes on 2/24/25. There are extra copies printed and available on the hallway table outside the Sanctuary and in the front office.



Written reports are also available on the hallway table outside the Sanctuary and in the front office.

The Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, March 9th following the 10am Worship Service.

There will not be a Fellowship Hour on this day.
Note that the snow date is the following Sunday, March 16th, 2025, following Worship.

The Church Office Hours

M—F from 9AM to 3PM

Please note that the office is closed on major holidays.

Pledges & Donations

Your monetary gift has a big impact on our ministries and those we serve!

Scan this QR code to learn more.



1. Place smart phone camera over the QR code and click the link that appears.

No need to "log in" for one time giving

2. Scroll the giving categories and make your offering.

Thank you for continuing to mail in your pledges!

It's ok to consolidate a month. You can also send via your own bank's Bill Pay, or go to Vanco via our website. Call Nikki Brown, FCC Bookkeeper, if you need help at 603-625-5093 x230.



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