



# Leverett Church Clarion

Monthly Newsletter

First Congregational Church of Leverett, Massachusetts

*An Open & Affirming member of the United Church of Christ*

[www.LeverettCongregationalChurch.org](http://www.LeverettCongregationalChurch.org)

March 2026

Lee Barstow, Pastor

413-530-4231

[leebarstow@gmail.com](mailto:leebarstow@gmail.com)

## Message from the Church Council

Greetings to all and thanks to all who attended our annual meeting last Sunday. We have a new member to the Council – Carrie Burke. Welcome Carrie and thanks for signing up...we look forward to your participation.

The annual meeting was a success, and we raised various topics that the Council will be engaged in during the coming year including possible outreach efforts, scholarships for local youth, and the status of the lake lot. If you have any suggestions or opinions on these topics or anything else related to church affairs, please feel free to reach out to any members of the Council. We'd like to hear from you. We'll be putting our contact information on the bulletin board at the back of the church.

Thanks again to all who served and continue to serve on various committees and others who help with vital church functions every week. Our congregation is small in number but we continue to have people step up to make this church work. We're looking forward to 2026.

Respectfully for the Church Council,

Ralph Tiner, Co-chair

Members: Tracey Field (Co-chair), Charlie Paulin, John Kealy,  
Sally Kealy, and Carrie Burke

*Rejoice in the Lord always.  
I will say it again: Rejoice!*

*Philippians 4:4*





## Letter from Lee

Pastor

March 2026



Dear LCC Community,

I believe it is worth repeating the short devotion I read as a sermon on February 22 to help us finish worship in time for annual meeting. It was written by Andrea Denney, Executive Director of Operational Ministries, Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago, in response to the story in Matthew's Gospel (4:1–11). Jesus is led into the "wilderness" immediately after being baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. Matthew says Jesus fasted for 40 days and night, and the devil tempted him three times, saying that Jesus can prove he is the son of God by accomplishing any one of them if he will only:

- 1) "command these stones to become loaves of bread," to which Jesus replies, "one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."
- 2) throw himself off the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem because God "will command his angels concerning you... on their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone." Jesus says, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."
- 3) Matthew then describes the final temptation and ends the story: "the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.' Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him."

Here is Ms. Denney's response: "Forty days and nights is biblical speak for a really long time. I know that humans can't survive that long without food, and if Jesus was fasting from water too, he wouldn't have survived more than three days. I believe in science enough to know that rocks don't become bread. I'm afraid of heights so no pinnacle of the temple for me. And I can barely manage my own life; why would I want all the kingdoms of the world?"

"It's so much easier to read this literally and therefore declare the whole situation as not applicable to my life. But Lent is an opportunity to go a little deeper than that literal reading. [Please note that it would be much easier to give up potato chips or

*(Continued on page 3)*

*(Continued from page 2)*

chocolate for Lent than going deeper. I've tried to convince God that my love of chips would constitute a real challenge. But so far, no luck.]

"So instead, these are the questions that I will be asking during Lent. Maybe some resonate with you.

"When do I turn to food/drink/television/social media-scrolling for comfort rather than listening to God's promise of my belovedness and worthiness?

"God has placed people in my life who love and support me. Why keep my armor up? Am I testing God? Am I testing my friends and family or doubting my own self-worth?

"I like solving problems, but has solving problems become my idol? Am I seeking affirmation and approval through my work? Can I believe that I am enough?

"That's quite a list and it will likely take me every bit of forty days and nights to work through it. Am I absolutely certain that I don't just want to give up chips or chocolate?"

Prayer: "God, draw me closer to your heart. Give me courage to stay with the tough questions. Help me to feel your presence in my wilderness. Amen."

In our annual meeting after worship on February, I felt that our congregation found courage as in the French meaning of heart-given strength, bravery, and wisdom: we voted to be listed as a co-sponsor in the activity brochures of LUCE, the immigrant-support network of Massachusetts. We sent to the choir the decision whether or not to add *The New Century Hymnal* in our worship, with its multitude of hymns and its mission of reducing gender-specific words. And we heard each other express enthusiasm for serving the community with events like performances by local musicians and choral groups, and like game nights in the winter, and like movies on the lawn in the summer. And more potlucks!

But the best demonstration of our big congregational (and choir's) heart came to me the next day when Paige Graham told me she has decided to stay as our music director.

More courage awaits. And joy. May we continue to seek them together.

Peace and blessings,

*Lee*



## Missions Report for March 2026

### ***CNC Children's Clothing Open House***

Saturday, March 28, from 10-1, at the Dixon House (4 Montague Road) behind the church. Come "SHOP" for FREE! Donations accepted but not necessary. Open to all with young children, newborn—elementary age.

### ***CNC Closet Schedule***

The CNC Closet provides FREE clothing for young children, newborn through elementary age.

CNC Children's Closet schedule for the coming Thursdays, from 8 am – 12 pm and by appointment if unable to make this time:

- *March 5, 12, 19, 26 OPEN*

***The Franklin Hampshire area Diaper Bank*** continues to supply us with disposable diapers we can offer to families for free. You can also find information about other resources available. We are located at the Dixon House, 4 Montague Road, Leverett. Call/Text or email Gillian Budine, CNC Program Coordinator (978) 935-4909 or [cnccoord@erving.com](mailto:cnccoord@erving.com).

***Visit the CNC website for more information*** about the services we provide in our community to families with young children <https://sites.google.com/erving.com/cncprogram/home>.

Thank you to the Leverett Congregational Church for collaboration and support!

***Calendar note:*** We'll have the One Great Hour of Sharing collection in April.

Claudia Gere and the Missions Committee



## Paige Graham: Our new music director

Paige has delighted our choir and congregation while serving as our interim music director since January 18. After taking the time since then to discern whether being full-time director is doable, she writes, "I would love to accept the position!... It's been an absolute joy so far." Needless to say, all are thrilled.

Paige has a Masters of Music degree in Choral Conducting from the University of Illinois. She has a stunning amount of experience directing choirs, including at Smith College. Besides her work at LCC, she also conducts the Hampshire Choral Society and teaches at the Regional Middle School in Amherst. To see details of her astounding work so far, see her CV at <https://tinyurl.com/25bo5hab> or:

Welcome, Paige!



**Drawing Class for Adults**  
*Birds and Botanicals with Mary Schreiber*

**Four Wednesdays**  
**10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**  
**March 4, 11, 18 & 25**

This four-part series provides an introduction to basic drawing techniques. No experience needed! We will focus on drawing nature including flowers, plants, and birds.

Space is limited and advance registration is required. Register at [leverettlibrary.org](http://leverettlibrary.org) or at the front desk.

Our teacher is Mary Schreiber, an experienced educator who has led art many art workshops and classes for all ages at art/cultural centers, museums, and libraries. She holds a master's degree from Bank Street College of Education. She is an accomplished visual artist and has shown work in art galleries.

This program is supported in part by a grant from the Leverett Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.






*From the Leverett Crafts & Arts website*  
My paintings are abstracted landscapes, often reflecting the low horizons and expansive skies in the Netherlands, where I grew up, or the beautiful sunsets over Leverett Pond where I live now.  
— Elsjé Sturtevant



*From the Leverett Elementary School website*



**Prayer notes****Sue Alward****Andrew Botieri**, *friend of Claudia Gere***Rich Connelly****Alice Field****John Field****Barbara Goodhind***The family and loved ones of **Ben Grabbe**, son of Nick Grabbe and Betsy Krogh***Mary Hankinson** *now living with family in Vermont***Peg Holcomb**, *friend of Lee***Kieran Kealy**, *brother of John Kealy & Mary Kealy***Stephen Kealy**, *brother of John Kealy & Mary Kealy**Family and friends of **Brian McCullough*****Hilda Nachman**, *aunt of Aida Markiw***Martha Napierski**, *niece of Alice Field, as well as Martha's husband, Edward***Marijke van Parijs**, *sister of Elsje Sturtevant***Dan Perkins**, *son of Jim Perkins and father of Alise Perkins***Esther Poldvee**, *friend of Tracey Field**The family and loved ones of **Karen Sallick**, friend of Susan Altabet and Stephen Dydo**The family and loved ones of **Erika Schütz**, including her niece Ninette Rothmüller, her great niece Lale Rothmüller, and Erika's husband Herrmann Schütz**Rob Winternitz and other loved ones of our music director **Michèle Smith** who died December 31**Family and friends of **Laszlo Tikos****The family and loved ones of **Betty Wilson** who died July 6, 2025. She was the wife of Rev. Fred Wilson, our pastor 1994-2004.***Tom Wolff**, *neighbor and devoted supporter of peace, including as co-founder of Hands Across the Hills**Victims of injustice & violence against each other and our earth***Prayer updates:** If you would like to add a person here, please leave a message on the church phone, 413-548-9199, or contact Lee Barstow, [leebarstow@gmail.com](mailto:leebarstow@gmail.com); Judy Ricker, [judyricker@aol.com](mailto:judyricker@aol.com); or Sarah Roys, [roysarah2@gmail.com](mailto:roysarah2@gmail.com)



**Connections**

Look around  
Every one of us with our own story, needs, strengths,  
and faults  
We light our chalice today honoring our common  
connection  
And also the uniqueness that lives within each of us.  
— Adam Slate

**UPCOMING WORSHIP**

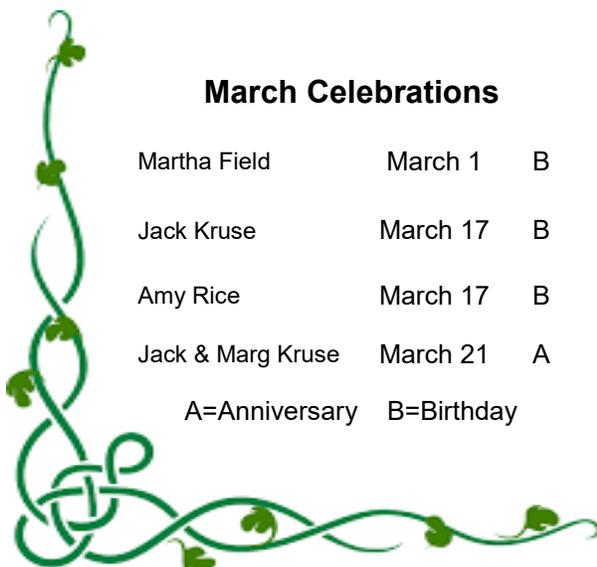
- March 1 Communion; Lee will preach
- March 8 Lee will read another’s sermon
- March 15 Randy Purinton will lead worship
- March 22 Lee will preach
- March 29 Fifth Sunday, special sermon time

***The March 2026 lectionary can be found here —  
[tinyurl.com/23wgsmp5](http://tinyurl.com/23wgsmp5)***

**March Celebrations**

Martha Field	March 1	B
Jack Kruse	March 17	B
Amy Rice	March 17	B
Jack & Marg Kruse	March 21	A

A=Anniversary B=Birthday



***Remember our lonely  
collection plate***

***You can mail*** your offering to  
Leverett Congregational Church  
PO Box 324, Leverett MA 01054

- ***Or give online at***

[www.leverettcongregationalchurch.org/  
donate](http://www.leverettcongregationalchurch.org/donate)

***OR*** find collection plates at the rear of the  
sanctuary when you attend in person



**First Congregational Church  
of Leverett**  
United Church of Christ  
4 Montague Road  
PO Box 324  
Leverett, MA 01054



### **Calendar**

**Church Council — March 8**

**Coffee Hour — March 22**

**Palm Sunday—March 29**

March 2026

### **Lee Barstow, Pastor**

Office Hours (Dixon House):  
Sundays following worship, by  
Appointment, in ordinary times  
Dixon House telephone and answering  
Machine & Lee: 413-530-4231  
[leebarstow@gmail.com](mailto:leebarstow@gmail.com)

### **Newsletter deadline:** March 2026 issue

Tuesday, February 24, 2026  
Judy Ricker, Editor, 548-9895  
[judyrick@aol.com](mailto:judyrick@aol.com)  
Sarah Roys, weekly Bulletin  
[royssarah2@gmail.com](mailto:royssarah2@gmail.com)

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[www.LeverettCongregationalChurch.org](http://www.LeverettCongregationalChurch.org)  
<https://www.facebook.com/lev1cc/>  
Nancy Paulin webmaster [npaulin@aol.com](mailto:npaulin@aol.com)

### **CONTACTS**

**Church Council** — Tracey Field, Co-Chair  
413-695-8268,  
[tracey1220@outlook.com](mailto:tracey1220@outlook.com)

**Clerk** — Judy Ricker, 548-9895  
[judyrick@aol.com](mailto:judyrick@aol.com)

**Missions** — Claudia Gere, Chair  
259-1741, [claudia@claudiagere.com](mailto:claudia@claudiagere.com)

**Music Director**— Paige Graham  
[paigegrahammusic@gmail.com](mailto:paigegrahammusic@gmail.com)

**Publicist (media information)**  
Claudia Gere, 259-1741  
[claudia@claudiagere.com](mailto:claudia@claudiagere.com)

**Social Activities**— Nancy Paulin 548-9644  
[npauln@aol.com](mailto:npauln@aol.com)  
Elsje Sturtevant 548-9406  
[elsje.sturtevant@gmail.com](mailto:elsje.sturtevant@gmail.com)

**Treasurer** — Barbara Tiner, 548-7919  
[barbara@wetlanded.com](mailto:barbara@wetlanded.com)