



Leverett Church Clarion

Monthly Newsletter

First Congregational Church of Leverett, Massachusetts

An Open & Affirming member of the United Church of Christ

www.LeverettCongregationalChurch.org

February 2025

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Notes from the Council — February 2025

Here are some thoughts about the Bylaws amendment proposal coming up at our Annual Meeting on February 23. The changes are informed by discussions held by the Church Council and with individuals, and through emails from others. The Council voted to present to the Annual Meeting, changes to the Bylaws regarding language concerning membership. We included those changes in our Notes last month in the Clarion. I encourage each of you to carefully review that proposal. There has been considerable discussion already about Section 1 and the proposed amendment.

From: “Membership in this Church shall be open to any person who has been baptized, has been confirmed, or has made public confession of **faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.**”

Change to: “Membership in this Church shall be open to any person who has been baptized, has been confirmed, or has made public confession of **faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, or is called to seek wisdom**

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*I meditate and
search my spirit*

(Psalm 77:6)

**Find the Annual
Meeting agenda on
page 7**



Letter from Lee

Pastor

February 2025



Dear LCC Community,

In this issue of the *Clarion* that follows the inauguration of our new president, I can't think of a better message to bring than excerpts from the sermon delivered by the Right Rev. Mariann Edgar Budde, bishop of the diocese of Washington, DC, at the national prayer service at Washington National Cathedral, on 21 January 2025, the day after President Trump's inauguration. It was an interfaith service, with representatives of several faith traditions, including Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, and Mormon. May her words inspire our work toward unity in God's love.

"Joined by many across the country, we have gathered this morning to pray for unity as a nation – not for agreement, political or otherwise, but for the kind of unity that fosters community across diversity and division, a unity that serves the common good.

"Unity, in this sense, is the threshold requirement for people to live together in a free society, it is the solid rock, as Jesus said, in this case upon which to build a nation. It is not conformity. It is not a victory of one over another. It is not weary politeness nor passivity born of exhaustion. Unity is not partisan.

"Rather, unity is a way of being with one another that encompasses and respects differences, that teaches us to hold multiple perspectives and life experiences as valid and worthy of respect; that enables us, in our communities and in the halls of power, to genuinely care for one another even when we disagree. Those across our country who dedicate their lives, or who volunteer, to help others in times of natural disaster, often at great risk to themselves, never ask those they are helping for whom they voted in the past election or what positions they hold on a particular issue. We are at our best when we follow their example.

"Unity, at times, is sacrificial, in the way that love is sacrificial, a giving of ourselves for the sake of another. Jesus of Nazareth, in his Sermon on the Mount, exhorts us to love not only our neighbors, but to love our enemies, and to pray for those who persecute us; to be merciful, as our God is merciful, and to forgive others, as God forgives us. Jesus went out of his way to welcome those whom his society deemed as outcasts...

"Those of us gathered here in this Cathedral are not naive about the realities of politics. When power, wealth and competing interests are at stake; when views of

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what America should be are in conflict; when there are strong opinions across a spectrum of possibilities and starkly different understandings of what the right course of action is, there will be winners and losers when votes are cast or decisions made that set the course of public policy and the prioritization of resources. It goes without saying that in a democracy, not everyone's particular hopes and dreams will be realized in a given legislative session or a presidential term or even a generation. Not everyone's specific prayers – for those of us who are people of prayer – will be answered as we would like. But for some, the loss of their hopes and dreams will be far more than political defeat, but instead a loss of equality, dignity, and livelihood.

“Given this, is true unity among us even possible? And why should we care about it?

“Well, I hope that we care, because the culture of contempt that has become normalized in our country threatens to destroy us. We are all bombarded daily with messages from what sociologists now call “the outrage industrial complex,” some of it driven by external forces whose interests are furthered by a polarized America. Contempt fuels our political campaigns and social media, and many profit from it. But it's a dangerous way to lead a country.

“I am a person of faith, and with God's help I believe that unity in this country is possible – not perfectly, for we are imperfect people and an imperfect union – but sufficient enough to keep us believing in and working to realize the ideals of the United States of America – ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence, with its assertion of innate human equality and dignity.

...“The first foundation for unity is honoring the inherent dignity of every human being, which is, as all faiths represented here affirm, the birthright of all people as children of the One God.

...“A second foundation for unity is honesty in both private conversation and public discourse.

...“A third foundation for unity is humility, which we all need, because we are all fallible human beings. We make mistakes. We say and do things that we regret. We have our blind spots and biases, and we are perhaps the most dangerous to ourselves and others when we are persuaded, without a doubt, that we are absolutely right and someone else is absolutely wrong.

...“The truth is that we are all people, capable of both good and bad. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn astutely observed that “The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties, but right through every human heart and through all human hearts.” The more we realize this, the more room we have within ourselves for humility, and openness to one another across our differences, because in fact, we are more like one another than we realize, and we

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in the teachings and life of Jesus Christ.”

Some members hold a long-standing attachment to the phrase “faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior” as a major tenet of the Congregational faith and believe it should not be changed. Those who support the change believe that, “called to seek wisdom in the teachings and life of Jesus Christ” is an equal representation of the gateway to membership.

Ralph Tiner and I have been wrestling with our shared history and how we can be helpful. We will be offering an amendment to the proposal to simply add another “or.” It is more Ralph’s idea than mine. We will propose that Section 1 read as follows:

“Membership in this Church shall be open to any person who has been baptized, has been confirmed, or has made public confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, or is called to seek wisdom in the teachings and life of Jesus Christ.”

Other proposed language changes are essentially housekeeping and wordsmithing.



Weather: It is almost February and we have not yet been challenged by deep snow. We have been challenged by cold weather. If there is snow or other inclement weather on Sunday morning, PLEASE check your email. Judy Ricker will send out either a cancellation notice or an update if we can pull a Zoom service together.

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need each other.

...“May God grant us all the strength and courage to honor the dignity of every human being, speak the truth in love, and walk humbly with one another and our God, for the good of all the people of this nation and the world.”

Peace and blessings,

Missions Report for February 2025

Meals on Wheels

Our church community showed overwhelming support for Meals on Wheels. Our collection totaled an astounding \$1,217. Helping those in our local community to remain in their homes, with safety checks and hot meals, is a tremendous gift that shows we care all year long!



Heifer International Donation in Rich Connelly's Honor

If you read December's *Clarion* issue with Judy Ricker's writeup and Rich Connelly's account of Heifer International, then it will be no surprise that in honor of the many years of Rich's above-and-beyond service, our church has made a \$750 donation in his name. Rich served in so many roles (as menial as washing the communion glasses, setting up our Internet connection, to the very time-consuming and difficult project of setting up and managing the very complex electronics that allow us to invite a wider community to participate in our weekly Sunday services through Zoom). In addition, he served many, many years on the Missions Committee, and hands-on, supported missions-sponsored events and activities.



Heifer International brings farming supplies (animals, seeds, tools, etc.) and instruction to communities around the world struggling with insufficient food and nonexistent to below-poverty incomes. In essence, they provide seed programs to jumpstart income producing agriculture practices. Spurred by Wilva Connelly, Rich's mother, and Rich's continued dedication, our congregation has contributed to this charity for many years.

Community Network for Children (CNC) Children's Closet

The Closet continues to be open on Thursdays* (drop-in/no appointment needed) from 8 a.m. to noon and by appointment as needed on other days for families who cannot make a Thursday morning.

*** CLOSED Thursday, February 20, during school vacation.**

The Franklin Hampshire area Diaper Bank continues to supply us with disposable diapers we can offer to families for free ... in December we had 22 families with 37 children, and distributed 363 diapers. 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

Thank you to our church community for supporting the CNC Children's Closet!



Claudia Gere, Missions Committee
Mary Hankinson, Beth Raffeld

Find us on YouTube

CHECK IT OUT Nancy Paulin reports that the church now has a YouTube channel with videos posted to it. Thanks go to Zoom booth regulars Zane Provost and Spencer Cliche, who recorded the 250th celebration held at our church in November. Special thanks to Zane, who split the recording into 11 different videos according to faith participants and added them to our YouTube channel. They are really great - do check them out!

Nancy says changes may be needed, but here's what's there for now.

Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@Leverett1stCongregationalChurc>

Playlists:

<https://www.youtube.com/@Leverett1stCongregationalChurc/playlists>

Playlist of 250th — 11 videos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjzWFjVEL1Y&list=PLQVHJxxaYkmcM7LR3SnYeNVCUs3ICu2-R>



Lee Barstow climbs aboard the church's July 6 float, one of many church photos to be found on YouTube. Young Paulins wave flags from within. Shown is parade formation celebrating the Church and Town's 250 years since their founding. Yes, the rear plate says Steve Woodard Carpentry. Steve is driving the truck. Check out the links above for more pictures.

**First Congregational Church of Leverett
Annual Meeting Agenda
In Person and by Zoom from the sanctuary
Sunday, February 23, 2025 – 10:30 a.m.
Following worship**

1. **Call to Order – *Ralph Tiner, Moderator***
2. **Roll Call of Members – *Judy Ricker, Clerk***
3. **Prayer – *Lee Barstow, Pastor***
4. **Action Items**

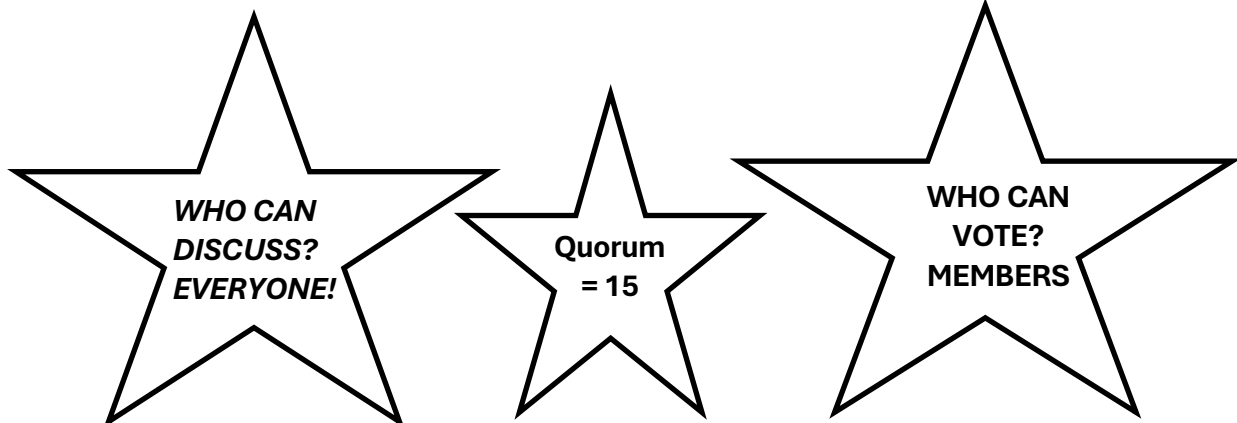


Written Reports – *Ralph Tiner, Moderator*

Budget, 2024 – *Charlie Paulin, Finance Committee*

Proposed Bylaws amendment

5. **Report of the Nominating Committee and Election
*Ralph Tiner, Moderator & Chair of Nominating Committee***
6. **Other Business, *Ralph Tiner, Moderator***
7. **Discussion/s - *tentative***
8. **Benediction – *Lee Barstow, Pastor***
9. **Adjournment – *Ralph Tiner, Moderator***



Prayer notes

Bill Anderson, *friend of Lee Barstow*

*The family and friends of **Bob Baldocchi**, who died in October, including his brother-in-law John Kealy and sisters-in-law Mary Kealy and Sally Kealy*



Lee Barstow

Andrew Botieri, *friend of Claudia Gere*

Bill Brower, *Judy Ricker's brother-in-law*

Chris Chicoine, *brother-in-law of Lee's friend Kaleigh Won*

Joan E., *friend of Mary Hankinson*

Alice Field

John Field

Ben Forbes, *Friend of John Root*

*The family and loved ones of **Mary Franks**, friend of the congregation, who died January 22, 2025*

*The family and loved ones of **Bradley Gage***

*The family and loved ones of **Frankie Hankinson** who died October 7.*

She leaves husband Denzel, son Jamie, daughter-in-law Barbara Oegg, and granddaughter Nellie, as well as the numerous members of the Hankinson family

Mary Hankinson

*The family and loved ones of **Judy Hobart** who died April 5*

Joshua Kalev, *husband of Betty Wilson's granddaughter Selilah Kalev*

Stasi Kanyuck, *daughter of Marg and Jack Kruse, granddaughter of Betty Wilson*

Karen, *Mary Kealy's godchild*

*The family and loved ones of **Michael Katz** who died in the Fall of 2024*

Stephen Kealy, *brother of Mary Kealy and John Kealy*

Nancy Lane *Patti Lane's sister in Idaho, daughter of the late Russell Lane*

Martha Napierski, *niece of Alice Field, as well as Martha's husband Edward*

*Family and loved ones of **Hugh O'Brien**, friend of John and Sally Kealy*

Julia O'Kelly, *Mary Ryan's niece*

Lydia Oram, *sister of Dmitri Oram, Michèle Smith's friend*

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Marijke van Parijs, sister of *Elsje Sturtevant*

Esther Poldvee, friend of *Tracey Field*

The family and loved ones of **Hal Ricker** *who died in June*

Roxana, friend of *Mary Kealy*

Michèle Smith

Cat White, *Mary Hankinson's niece*

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; Judy Ricker, judyricker@aol.com; or Sarah Roys, royssarah2@gmail.com



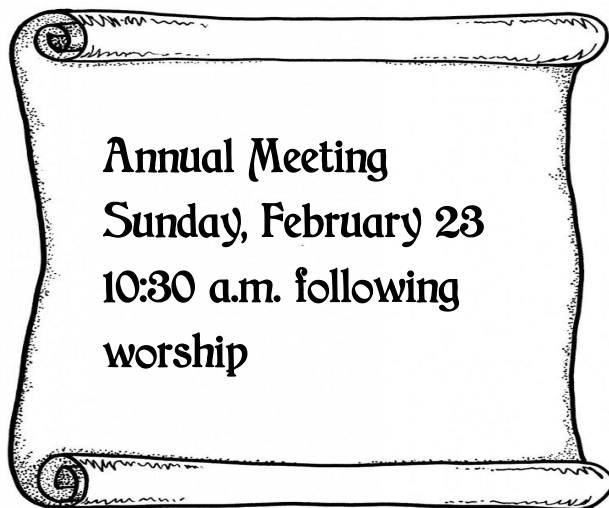
**Remember our lonely
collection plate**

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

Or give online at
leverettcongregationalchurch.org

Or find collection plates in-
person at the rear of the
sanctuary

Thank You!



**Annual Meeting
Sunday, February 23
10:30 a.m. following
worship**

| UPCOMING WORSHIP | |
|------------------|-----------------------------|
| February 2 | Communion, Lee preaches |
| February 9 | Randy Hyvonen leads worship |
| February 16 | Lee leads worship |
| February 23 | Lee leads worship |

The February 2025 lectionary can be found here —

<https://tinyurl.com/2486gyj6>



**First Congregational Church
of Leverett**
United Church of Christ
4 Montague Road
PO Box 324
Leverett, MA 010545



Calendar
Annual Meeting in
sanctuary,
February 23,
following
shortened worship

February 2025

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

Newsletter deadline: March 2025 issue

Tuesday, February 25, 2025
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