



Leverett Church Clarion

Monthly Newsletter

First Congregational Church of Leverett, Massachusetts

An Open & Affirming member of the United Church of Christ

www.LeverettCongregationalChurch.org

January 2026

Lee Barstow, Pastor

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A Message of Thanks from the Church Council —

Season's greetings to all. We had a great turnout for the Candlelight Service (see Nancy Paulin's pictures). We were able to form a complete circle around the pews as attendees lit their candles and sang "Silent Night," followed by Merry Christmas and Happy New Year wishes to all. Special thanks to Susan Altabet for stepping in for Michèle Smith to lead the choir and bring in her musician colleagues – the Leverett Consort (Anna Smith, Claudia Philips, Jill Franks, Marsha Hertel, Stephen Dydo, Susan Altabet) — who produced a wonderful selection of music along with our choir for our joyous celebration of the birth of Jesus. We also want to especially thank Claudia Phillips for her piano accompaniment throughout the service. It was no small chore filling in at virtually the last minute. We also want to thank folks who volunteered to do readings for this service: Tracey Field, Tom Gottweis, Barbara Tiner, Ninette Rothmueller, Lale Rothmueller-Luce, John Kealy, and Rev. Randy Hyvonen.

(Council Report Continued on page 3)

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 2 Corinthians 5:17





Letter from Lee

Pastor

January 2026



Dear LCC Community,

I am delighted to return to pastoring, which includes writing this letter to our wider community each month. What a privilege it is to be asked to consider my thoughts about important topics and share what might be helpful to you.

Today—in the week between Christmas and the New Year—I am aware that we are still in our church calendar’s season of Christmas, which gives me the opportunity to share some thoughts about the Christmas miracle we have just celebrated.

What a precious contribution we give the world, telling such a wonderful story that illustrates our deepest human reality. We celebrate that Jesus was born “Emmanuel” (“God with us”) and that Jesus grew up to teach us we are *all born of God*... God is *with each of us*, in every moment and for all time. “You are the light of the world,” he proclaims to his listeners during the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:14), just as he says in the gospel of John, “I am the light of the world.”

To me, this is an undying promise: that no matter how deep the darkness within us or in the world, there is a deeper light that created us and sustains us. No matter how deep our wounds, this light is deeper. Or instead of “light,” call it love. Call it wisdom. Call it joy. Call it whatever word best describes any moment when you have truly felt the *kin-dom* of God... you were filled with the divine... you have *known* that God is in you, and you are in God.

This is what John Philip Newell means when he says we are not made *by* God, we are made *of* God. The goal of every wisdom tradition is to help us trust this... to learn that our difficulties are never the end of the story. We always have access to “the power for life that is within us... the life-force that is in our senses and the might that is in our heart.” [1]

Jesus was born to help us draw on the source of this power. He came to help us recognize the depth of our life-given strength. He came to help us find the joy of serving love with our strength.

May we seek this strength from the source of our lives. May we find it. And may we use it to serve love.

Peace and blessings,

Lee

[1] *Sounds of the Eternal, A Celtic Psalter*, Tuesday morning
“Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession.”

(Council Report Continued from page 1)

We also want to acknowledge and thank folks who work behind the scenes to make this Candlelight Service and the Advent season a success: Sarah Roys for preparing the bulletins, Judy Ricker for help assembling the Advent readings throughout the month, and Zane Provost and his father Paul Provost for tech expertise. Decorations for the holiday were provided by the following: the Field Family for the Advent evergreen wreath, candles, and loft decorations, Sarah Roys for candles in the windows, the Hankinson Family for wreaths on the windows, Claudia Gere for evergreen arrangements at the pulpit, Barbara Goodhind for poinsettia decorations in the windows, John and Kate Moruzzi for wreaths on the church front, and the Tiners for the Christmas tree decoration on the front lawn and for putting up the banner.

For the Candlelight Service, we traditionally take a collection for Meals on Wheels. This year we're proud to say that we raised \$782 that evening!

We also want to thank Barbara and others who participated in our December cookie swap and who delivered cookies to our homebound folks who attend our Zoom services and support our church.

We'd like to thank all the ministers who have filled in for Lee during his absence: Rev. Nathan M. Patti, Rev. Julie Olmsted, Rev. Marguerite Sheehan, Alice Goodwin-Brown, and Rev. Randy Hyvonen. We enjoyed having them lead our worship and provide pastoral care for those in need of such. The Council gave our music director Michèle Smith a month's medical leave during her recent illness.

With the new year, we welcome Lee Barstow back to the pulpit. We will celebrate his return on January 4 with a coffee hour after church. He has had four months to recover from surgery and is as eager to return as we are to have him back. So please join us on Sunday.

Meanwhile, we all look forward to a healthy, happy and peaceful new year

Respectfully for the Council
Ralph Tiner

MISSIONS NEWS—January 2026

Christmas Fund

One of three UCC annual offerings, the Christmas Fund helps us express our gratitude for those who serve as clergy and those who support our clergy who are facing financial difficulties. You can contribute throughout the month of January.



Meals on Wheels

Following the Candlelight Service, we received a mighty \$722 in donations for Meals on Wheels. Meals on Wheels brings human contact to shut-ins who otherwise might not be able to stay in their home, a safety check and nutrition. What a gift!

Community Network for Children

Food Cards for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Beyond

Thanks to your continuing generosity, we've raised a grand total of \$1200 in food gift cards for families need serviced by the CNC. These cards provide more the gift of food, they give an unexpected lift during tough times.



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:

- January 8, 15, 22, 29 OPEN
- February 5, 12, 26 OPEN
- 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.

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>.

How to Donate

You can choose to donate the easiest way for you: by mailing your check made out to Leverett Congregational Church (write "Christmas Fund" in the memo line), PO Box 324, Leverett MA 01054 OR donate online at <https://www.leverettcongregationalchurch.org/donate>. Choose any of the three categories, but click on the "Write us a comment" box and let us know where you would like your contribution to go, (Christmas Fund, for example). If you're attending church you can put a check or money in an envelope for the Christmas Fund and place it in the collection plate.

Claudia Gere for the Missions Committee

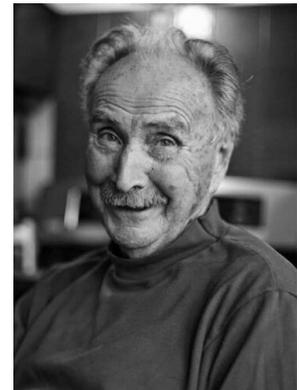


Candlelight Service, December 23 Top: Aida Markiw, Stephen Dydo; church in snow. Bottom: Choir, led by Claudia Phillips. Zoom loft techs: Zane Provost, Paul Provost *Photos: Nancy Paulin*

Laszlo M. Tikos Sr.

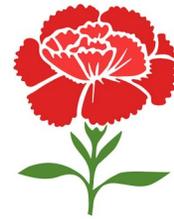
Laszlo Tikos, a long-time member of the Leverett Congregational Church, died November 30, 2025. He was born in Keszthely, Hungary in 1932. His wife, Doris, was our church's music director.

Laszlo fled from Hungary, going first to Bavaria where he completed doctoral studies while also working for Radio Free Europe. Later he and Doris came to the U.S. for a position at the University of Massachusetts, where he taught Russian language and literature in the Slavic department. He was fluent in four languages, as well as a number of regional languages. He wrote several books about the Ukrainian writer Nikolai Gogol. He is survived by four children, seven grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. Doris died in 2023.



Prayer notes**Bill Anderson**, *friend of Lee Barstow***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***The family and loved ones of **Mary Franks**, friend of the congregation, who died in January***Barbara Goodhind****Mary Hankinson** *now living with family in Vermont***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***Kieran Kealy**, *brother of John Kealy & Mary Kealy**Church neighbor **Roy Kimmel**, husband of Cynthia Thomas Kimmel, died in August***Nancy Lane** *Patti Lane's sister in Idaho, daughter of the late Russell Lane***Jean Larouche**, *friend of Lee Barstow***Hilda Nachman**, *aunt of Aida Markiw***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**The family and loved ones of **Jack O'Kelly**, Mary Ryan's nephew***Alice Oram**, *friend of Lee Barstow***Marijke van Parijs**, *sister of Elsjie Sturtevant***Dan Perkins**, *son of Jim Perkins and father of Alise Perkins***Flip Rosenberry**, *friend of Lee Barstow***Roxana**, *friend of Mary Kealy**(Prayer notes, Continued on page 7)*

(Prayer notes, continued from page 6)



The family and loved ones of **Erika Schütz**, including her niece **Ninette Rothmüller**, her great niece **Lale Rothmüller**, and Erika's husband **Herrmann Schütz**
The family and loved ones of our music director **Michèle Smith** who died in the past week. More later

Cat White, Mary Hankinson's niece

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.

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

The January 2026 lectionary can be found here —

<https://www.sneucc.org/files/files/documentsdailylectionary/jan+2026.pdf>

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

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

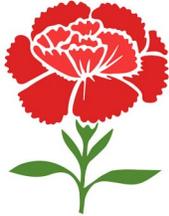
January Celebrations

Judy Ricker	January 1	B
Becky Zak	January 7	B
Jeff Stowell	January 8	B
John Moruzzi	January 17	B
Jeremy Rice	January 17	B
Amelia Perkins	January 30	B
John Kealy	January 31	B

Please help with Coffee Hour



**First Congregational Church
of Leverett**
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Calendar

**January 4 — Lee Barstow returns; Coffee
Hour**
January 11 — Council Meeting

January 2026

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Sundays following worship, by
Appointment, in ordinary times
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