



# 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)

January 2025

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## ***Notes from the Church Council — January 2025***

### **Church Council Membership**

The Church Council is comprised of 5 to 7 members of the congregation, each elected for four years. It serves as the executive function of the Congregation between Annual Meetings. It currently has 5 members, with and Charlie Paulin completing his fourth year. This means that there will be at least one and up to three seats to be filled by the election at the next Annual Meeting on February 23, 2025. The current Council schedules meetings once a month, immediately after Sunday service, that usually last no later than 12:30 p.m. and often end earlier.

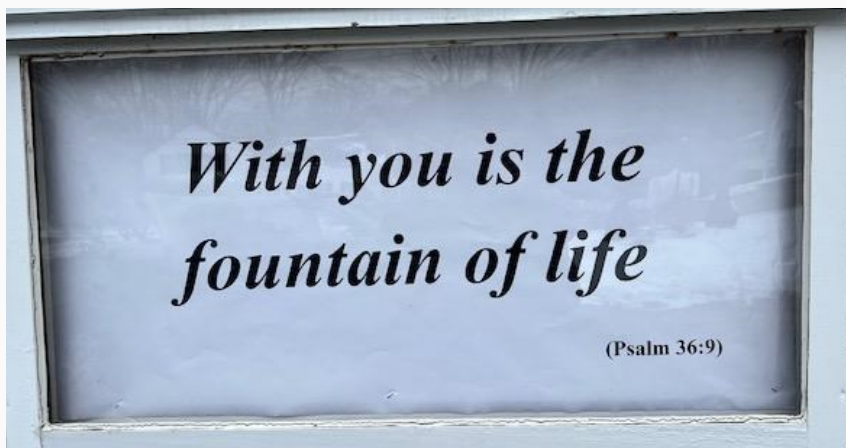
### **Proposed Bylaws Change**

At our December 8 meeting, the Church Council voted to propose certain changes to the Bylaws for consideration at the February 23, 2025 Annual Meeting as they refer to membership. The intent of the changes is to simplify the language reflecting core beliefs. The current language and the proposed language as follows.

#### ***Current Language:***

1. 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.

*(Continued on page 4)*



**Sign up for Zoom worship at "Online Worship Service" on our website**  
**[leverettcongregational-church.org](http://leverettcongregational-church.org)**



## Letter from Lee

**Pastor**

January 2025



Dear LCC Community,

This past Sunday, which was our First Sunday after Christmas in our Christmas season that continues until January 6, the day we celebrate the Wise Men's arrival at the manger, we decided to change things up a bit in worship. We tilted the service toward children (of all ages). During sermon time, Kim Mohlar read *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* while the pages of the book were displayed on our big screen in all their fantastical Dr. Seuss glory.

Stephen Dydo and Susan Altabet passed out instruments and invited all to play them while singing along to "Deck the Halls" and "We Wish You a Merry Christmas."

We also sang Christmas carols, prayed prayers which would hopefully engage children, and read scripture passages regarding children. In fact, the lectionary-suggested Gospel reading was the story of Mary and Joseph missing 12-year-old Jesus on their way home from Passover in Jerusalem, because he had stayed in the temple and was wowing the priests with his questions and his understanding (Luke 2:41-52, from *The Message*).

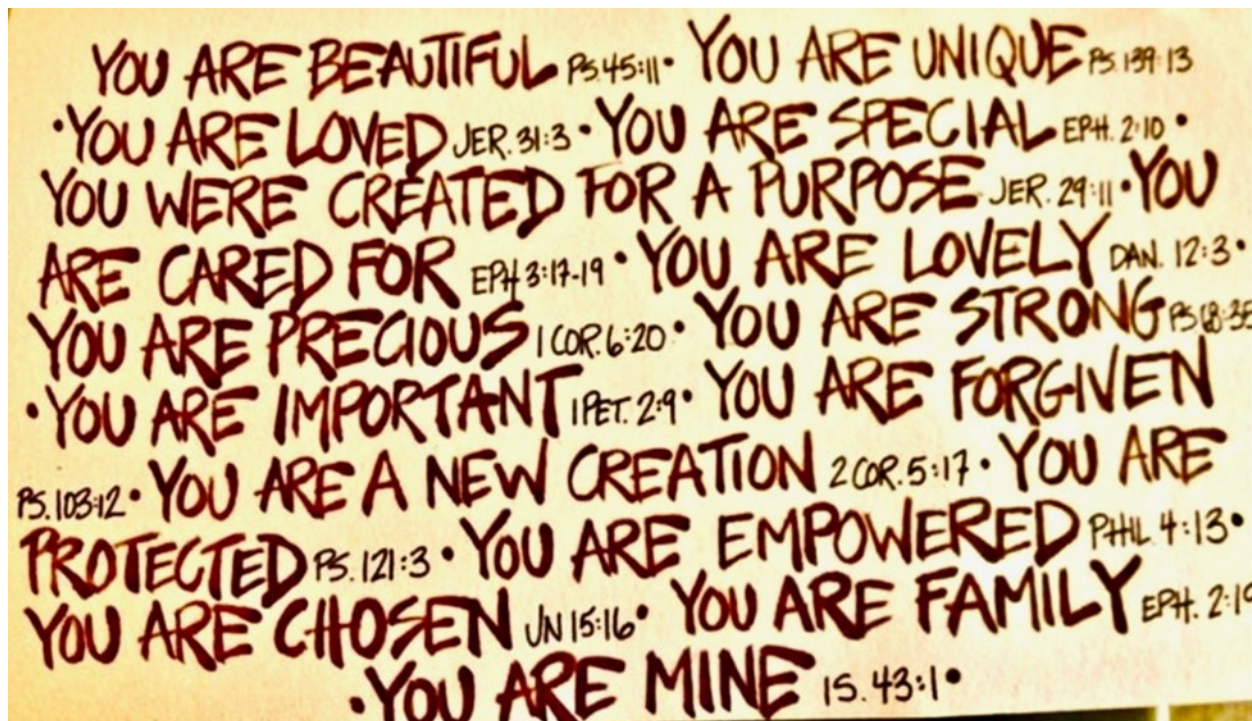
Then we shifted to readings that I had hoped would speak to us adults, who need so badly to nurture and celebrate the holy child within us, as Jesus encourages us to do in Matthew 19: 13-14: "Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; but Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.'"

Finally, I read a "scripture reading" I hope we can all hear speaking to us. It is actually a compendium of many phrases from many books of the Bible. I share it here on the next page in hopes that you can receive it... that you can feel the truth in it during this season when we celebrate *Emmanuel*... God with us... born in the manger of our hearts.

Peace and blessings,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lee".





***The Bible speaks to each of us, notes Lee in his letter***

John and Kate Moruzzi, gave two wreaths for the front of the church. Here, right, they position one of them.

The Candlelight Service December 23, 2024, concludes with lit candles and the singing of "Silent Night."



Photo: Nancy Paulin



Photo: Charlie Paulin

*(Lee message Continued from page 1)*

2. Persons desiring to unite with the Church shall meet with the Church Council and the Pastor for orientation to the Church. Candidates are welcomed to membership by the Church Council, and are introduced to the congregation prior to their being received into the Church at the following Communion Service.

3. Members shall pledge themselves to attend the regular worship of the Church and the celebration of the Lord's Supper; to live the Christian life; to share in the life and work of the Church; to contribute to its support and benevolences; and to seek diligently the spiritual welfare of the membership and the community.

***Proposed Language:***

1. *Membership in this Church is open to any person who has been baptized, has been confirmed, or is called to seek wisdom in the teachings and life of Jesus Christ.*

2. *Persons desiring to unite with the Church shall meet with the Church Council and the Pastor for orientation to the Church. Candidates are welcomed to membership by the Church Council, and are introduced to the congregation prior to being received into the Church at the following Communion Service.*

3. *Members agree to attend Church worship and celebrate Holy Communion; to seek to live as Jesus taught; to share in the life and work of the Church; to support it and its benevolences; and to pursue the spiritual welfare of its membership and community.*

—Charile Paulin  
Council Chair

## ***Candlelight service, Dec. 23***



UPCOMING WORSHIP	
January 5	Communion, Lee preaches
January 12	Randy Hyvonen leads worship
January 19	Randy leads worship again
January 26	Lee leads worship; sermon time tbd
February 2	Communion, Lee preaches

Photos: Nancy Paulin





## Missions Report for December 2024

### *The Christmas Fund*



One of our three UCC collections is for the Christmas Fund, which supports veterans of our wider church community, those who serve our churches and are facing financial difficulties. We make this offering during the month of January, because Christmas is such a busy time for giving. The veterans of our churches who are in need, experience that need year round. Make checks payable to Leverett Congregational Church; place in the collection plate or mail to: PO Box 324, Leverett MA 01054; or donate online at <https://www.leverettcongregationalchurch.org/donate>. In the memo or comments sections specify where you wish to contribute: Christmas Fund.

### *Community Network for Children (CNC) Closet*

The CNC Children's Closet has been very active during their open hours on Thursday.

**The Closet will be OPEN January 9, 16, 23, 30**

Or open by appointment as needed for those who cannot make it during their open hours. Call/Text or email Gillian Budine, CNC Program Coordinator 413-422-0170 or [cnccoord@erving.com](mailto:cnccoord@erving.com). We are located at the Dixon House, 4 Montague Road, Leverett.

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



### *Adopt a Family of Franklin County*



We will have a full report on our contributions to Adopt-a-Family of Franklin County in our next *Clarion*, but a quick note of thanks. We know we have made a difference to the many families and children who have receive our gifts of food, clothing, and presents. A welcome sign of hope for those who would otherwise experience a bleak Christmas. I wish I could pass along the warmhearted greeting I received when I dropped off the clothing...just know that all of your contributions no matter how small are gratefully appreciated and truly make a difference.

### *Meals on Wheels*

Again, this year we received donations for Meals on Wheels following the Candlelight Service, raising at last tally, \$600. The services Meals on Wheels offers have a huge impact on our local community, as well as those in our church community, ensuring they receive daily nourishment and a wellness check.

Thanks to our congregation for such generosity supporting those causes dear to us!



## ***Sounds of music directors***

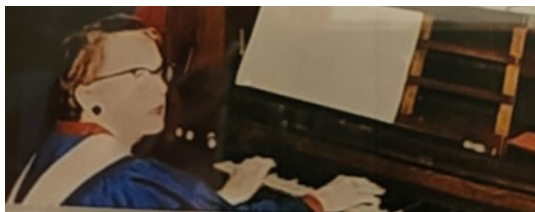
***As told by Tracey Field, Choir and Council member***

Over the last several decades our church has been blessed with having several talented music directors who have played our reed organ in the back of the church, the black upright piano, the Steinway grand piano, and the small portable electric keyboard. All of this is accomplished while leading energetic choirs of various sizes and voices in the choir loft and more often now in the front of the church. The choir loft is now occupied by the Zoom operation.

A couple notes of interest: Have you ever noticed the U shape in the front of the church where the cross hangs and the other U shape in the choir loft behind the organ? This is called a “shell” and is what helps make our little church have such wonderful acoustics. It allows for the sound of the choir and organ to resonate and travel throughout, especially when they are in the loft.

For years our church has subscribed to a choir book called The Choir Herald. Each month these books are full of beautiful arrangements of sacred music that pertain to the current clerical period. The older books are still used today at various times for anthems. Each booklet contains an editor’s commentary about the music, which at times amuses the current choir.

*Note: I was unable to get the exact dates for each of our music directors, so I use approximate ranges of time.*



In the early 1970s to mid-1980s **Ruth Kidder** played the reed organ in the choir loft and directed the choir in weekly anthems, as well as glory preludes and responsive “Amens” from the back of the red and pilgrim hymnals. In addition to her many talents as a musician she was also

the head seamstress for Amherst College’s drama department.

**Doris Tikos** was already a member of our choir when Ruth Kidder retired in the 1980s. We were blessed to have Doris step in as our choir director and organist. She played the organ in the choir loft, as well as the black upright piano then in the front of the church. In addition to working with the senior choir, Doris helped create an active children’s choir. I started out in the junior choir with Doris and eventually made it to the senior choir. In the junior choir she encouraged me to sing my first solo at the age of six. In addition to leading music in our church for years, Doris also taught German



*(Music Directors Continued on page 7)*

*(Music Directors: Continued from page 6)*

and music at the University of Massachusetts. In the mid-1990s about the same time that Fred Wilson retired, Doris also retired from her many years of service as our music director.

After an extensive search by the music committee, **Hope Solanis** was brought on to lead the choir and play music for our services. During this time our vintage reed organ in the choir loft was in need of major repairs. A rare, but qualified repair specialist was found in Vermont. He worked on organs only during the winter months, so our reed organ traveled to Vermont one winter for repairs. This left a large gap in the choir loft for a long period of time. During this time, the choir made a “temporary” move to the front of the church so they could be accompanied by the upright piano or the small electric keyboard. The loft now houses our Zoom staff. The choir remains down front.



Hope Solanis introduced some newer music pieces to the church and choir, as well as performed some of her own original works. When she moved and did not have room in her new home, she donated her Steinway piano to the church, now used in the front of the church full time. She also introduced the church and choir to Easter cantata pieces and boosted the choir’s role in the Christmas candlelight service. Hope served our congregation for a very short period of time. During one time when she was away, a wonderful organist, Michèle Smith, filled in for her. Well, you can take it from here! We were blessed to have Michèle Smith take over as music director when Hope Solanis went on to pursue other opportunities.



This brings us to our current fearless leader **Michèle Smith**. She has played both the organ and piano during her many years with us. She also plays the small portable electric keyboard at both the outdoor Easter sunrise and the annual lakeside services. Memorably, she carried on even when the batteries started to fall out of the keyboard casing one year. I had to hold them in place so she could carry on! She has brought in numerous guest musicians for special occasions and during the summer months while the choir is on break. Michèle continues to challenge the choir with older familiar pieces still stored in the choir loft as well as newer music.

*Photos found: Nancy Paulin*

**Prayer notes**

*The family and loved ones of **Dean Alfange***

**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

**Jeff and Judy Eiseman**, family members of Steve Woodard

**Alice Field**

**John Field**

**Ben Forbes**, Friend of John Root

**Mary Franks**, friend of the congregation

*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 Oeg 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***

**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*

*(Prayer notes, Continued on page 9)*



*(Prayer notes, continued from page 8)*

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

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

**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](mailto:leebarstow@gmail.com); Judy Ricker, [judyricker@aol.com](mailto:judyricker@aol.com); or Sarah Roys, [royssarah2@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://leverettcongregationalchurch.org)

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

**Thank You!**

**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

**The January 2025 lectionary can be found here —**

**<https://tinyurl.com/2bgwyy4b>**



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

### **Calendar**

**January 5 — Communion. Lee preaches**  
**January 15 — Randy Hyvonen leads worship**  
**January 19 — Randy leads worship again**  
**January 26 — Lee leads worship; sermon  
time tbd**  
**February 2 — Communion. Lee preaches**  
**Sunday, February 23 — Annual Meeting  
following worship**

January 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](mailto:leebarstow@gmail.com)

### **Newsletter deadline: February 2025 issue**

Tuesday, January 28, 2025  
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