

**First Congregational Church  
508 Union Street  
Manchester, New Hampshire**



**ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2019**  
**Written Committee Reports**

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## Senior Pastor's Report

*Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they put it on top of a lampstand, and it shines on all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before people, so they can see the good things you do and praise your Father who is in heaven.*

—Matthew 5:15-16 (CEB)

Dear Friends,

As usual, when it comes around time to write my annual report, I'm always a bit taken aback to realize how much territory we've covered in the previous year. Just to give you a flavor: In January we held an Ecclesiastical Council for Emelia Attridge and continued with the Church Leadership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Class. February was our Death by Chocolate event and the beginning of my class on Exodus. In March we had the Holocaust Event w/ Dirkje Legerstee. April was the Conference-Wide Open and Affirming Event and the Songweavers concert. May saw the Conference-Wide UCC Women's Gathering. In June we completed our Confirmation Class, participated in the Queen City Pride Event, continued our Special Olympics Summer Games involvement and completed our Congregational Assessment Tool Survey. In July we were visited by the Bell Ringer group from Adam's old church in New Jersey. August, thankfully, was vacation (for me at least). In September we had our CAT Survey Feedback Session, followed by an All-Church Meeting in October, and my class on Galatians. In November we celebrated Emelia Attridge's Ordination and began offering a monthly Men's Fellowship Breakfast. In December we had our Bluegrass Concert and hosted the Manchester Choral Society's Christmas Concert as well.

Whew! All of this, of course, on top of the many other "normal" activities that go on day in and day out. When family members and others outside our church come across copies of our Sunday News and/or Church Window, they are always impressed, saying how amazingly active we are. All that we do together as a church speaks volumes about the faith and dedication of our congregation. I know you've heard it before, but you all deserve a tremendous round of applause; staff, lay leaders, members and friends.

Of course, despite our activity, we are all well aware of the challenges churches like ours are facing these days. We've been hearing about the growth of the "Nones" for some time now. A recent Wall Street Journal article quotes a Pew Research Study claiming that Nones continue to be "the fastest-growing population on the American religious landscape." On the other hand, a 2018 study for the American Journal of Epidemiology looked at those being raised with religious or spiritual beliefs and found that "children or teens who reported attending a religious service at least once per week scored higher on psychological well-being measurements and had lower risks of mental illness." Another study, of Congregational Economic Practices found that, after surveying more than 1200 churches, "there are more congregations experiencing growth in attendance than there are ones experiencing decline."

As your pastor, I'm always trying to read the tea leaves in studies of this kind. Despite the impression you may have gotten, the news is not all bad for churches like ours. Of course, what's happening across the country may or may not reflect what's happening locally. But the wealth of resources we have in our people, our property and our endowment are very much in our favor. We just need to remember that our job, as always, is to continue doing what we do faithfully and well, trusting the future into God's hands.

I look forward to another wonderful year as your pastor. There are lots of things in the works and I encourage you to stay tuned. I'm deeply grateful to all of you for the loving and caring people you are. Many, many thanks. And on a personal note, come June 21<sup>st</sup>, Pam and I will be celebrating 40 years of wedded bliss. I am deeply grateful to her as my soul mate and beloved wife and partner.

Yours in Grace,  
Rev. Kevin

## Music Ministry Report

*He says, "I will declare your name to your brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises. - Hebrews 2:12*

As I reflect upon the past year, I feel it is appropriate to count our many blessings. I am continually amazed at the level of enthusiasm and dedication to the service of First Congregational Church. Most notably, although I may be biased, I am grateful for the people in music ministry. Because of these talented people, we continue to make inspirational music that uplifted worship. In the next few paragraphs, I will outline a few highlights of the past year.

The Chancel Choir continued to faithfully serve the church by singing almost every Sunday from September through mid-June. We have sung a variety of musical styles and expanded our repertoire. The choir led worship for special services including Gospel Sunday, Easter, World Communion Sunday, Christmas Eve, Music Sunday, and the ordination of Emelia Attridge. The Sabbath Bells also rang beautifully for our special Handbell Sunday and for Thanksgiving and the Advent season.

The youth choir also sang at various times in the year. Their most memorable contributions were for our Thanksgiving Sunday service and for our Family Advent service. They have a great deal of energy and enthusiasm! Working with them has been an absolute joy, and I look forward to continuing that momentum into the next year.

During the summer months, the Chancel Choir and Sabbath Bells took a seasonal break and individual musicians signed up to help lead worship. My thanks to those who faithfully served: Kevin Pleas, Bob Ward, Lauren Peithmann, Michelle Harrington, Carol Soucy, Peter Labombarde, Chris Gantner, and Bridget Thornton. We were especially blessed to host the Calvin Handbell Ringers from the First Presbyterian Church in Red Bank, NJ in July. I would also be remiss if I did not mention the contributions of Jay Daly. Jay graced us with his trumpet playing for the Sunday commemorating Memorial Day, and he helped organize our brass musicians for Easter. And lastly, I would also like to sincerely thank Leo LeBlanc for playing percussion at various times throughout the year.

One of the high focal points of the year was our "Bluegrass" Christmas concert. By all accounts, it was a smashing success. The choir sang beautifully and our instrumentalists were top notch. We were blessed to have a good audience in attendance who brought a great spirit. I would like to thank Kevin Pleas and Liz Verity for their help in reading the poetry and essays throughout the concert. We raised a little over \$1,300 for the Union Leader's Santa Fund. I will remember this Christmas concert fondly.

In Music Ministry, we had no shortage of great blessings this past year. We will continue our work into 2020 and beyond. May God uphold us, bless us, and grant us the grace, enthusiasm, and joy for the work ahead of us.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Adam Peithmann, Director of Music Ministry

## Director of Parish Care

This year certainly flew by. My mother always used to say that the older you get, the faster time goes. That is so true.

I have kept very busy in 2019 visiting with many of you and talking with you on the phone or at church. Sixteen of our senior citizens passed away this year, many of whom were long-time active members. They are all missed.

During 2019 I preached ten times and did Pulpit Supply at Bethany Chapel one time. I assisted Kevin with two Communion Services and led two Communion Services in the Chapel and organized and led the Blue Christmas Service. I led the Memorial Service and Burial Service for David Gaudes. I continue to lift your prayers every Sunday. Many people for whom we have prayed have told me that they feel the prayers. It is an honor to be a part in this.

I attended the UCC Prepared to Serve, the installation of Maureen Frescott as Senior Pastor of Amherst Congregational Church, and the Ordination of Emelia Attridge.

I have completed my first unit of study at Sioux Falls Seminary and am now doing an Old Testament Course from there and a preaching course from New York School of Ministry. At Sioux Falls Seminary, I attended a week of “intensives”. The theme of the week was “conflicts” and I attended workshops on navigating conflicts in my life and in church settings. I also had to write a paper on something I was conflicted about and we met in small groups to discuss our papers and help, pray for, and encourage each other. The week was an experience I will never forget and I look forward to attending another gathering.

Thank you to Ellie Stetson, Pam LeBlanc, and Tom Irving who are on my Member in Discernment Committee, and thank you to Carol Soucy who is my personal advisor, and Kevin Pleas who is my Spiritual Advisor. I also have an Educational Advisor from Sioux Falls Seminary, and my UCC Advisor Maureen Frescott. I also thank all of you for your support.

Respectfully submitted,  
Barbara Papagian, Commissioned Minister of Pastoral Care

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## Reports from the Ministry of Spirituality

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The Ministry of Spirituality area is comprised of a Coordinator, 3 Council Representatives, the Board of Deacons and numerous committees and groups that support worship and spiritual opportunities throughout the year.

It was another extremely busy and productive year for this area of worship. The first half of the year proved to be very challenging with three major new events in March and April, all the while trying to balance many of our traditional ones. You’ll find greater detail in the individual committee reports but here are some of the highlights from 2019:

**January** – The Members in Discernment Team hosted the reception following Emelia Attridge’s Ecclesiastical Council. The Altar Design Team took down and packed away all of the Christmas decorations.

**February** – The Open and Affirming Committee was saddened by the death of fellow member, Michael Pugh. Michael always offered thoughtful perspective and support and is greatly missed. The Memorial Reception Team organized the reception following Michael’s memorial service.

**March** – The Deacons hosted the Angels in Human Skin: A Family’s Survival of World War II exhibit and presentation by Rev. Dr. Dirkje Legerstee. This multi day event included an artist reception, luncheon and a session attended by Central High School students.

**April** – The church was the host site for the statewide UCC Open and Affirming spring conference. The Open and Affirming Committee helped in planning, organizing and hosting the day. The Deacons hosted the Songweavers Concert. The Deacons also participated in the Maundy Thursday Service which moved back to the Sanctuary this year, and the Altar Design Team decorated the altar with lilies and tulips for Easter.

**June** – The CYM Committee hosted the Teachers Appreciation Breakfast. The Open and Affirming Committee (along with the Membership Team and Outreach Committee) participated in the Queen City Pride Block Party held right outside our church on Hanover Street.

**Summer** – The Quilters worked over the summer on a new project - Dress A Girl. This project was led by Linda Bonetti who has been involved with the organization for some time. The Memorial Reception Team was called into service for two receptions over the summer.

**September** – The Deacons and Quilters coordinated the Blessing of the Dresses and Skirts that were then packed and sent to Zimbabwe. The Deacons held and hosted the Usher Breakfast Meeting.

**November** – The Members in Discernment Team hosted Emelia Attridge’s Ordination Reception, the Altar Design Team decorated the altar with vegetables and fruits for Thanksgiving, the CYM Committee coordinated the Advent Workshop. On Thanksgiving Sunday, we celebrated the 2<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of the Open and Affirming vote during the service. The Open and Affirming Committee helped with the planning and participated during that portion of the service.

**December** – Blue Christmas Service was offered and led by Barbara Papagian and Kathy Alger. The Altar Design Team decorated the Sanctuary, Parlor, and Dining room and also met again to decorate the altar with poinsettias for Christmas.

The Parish/Pastor Relations Committee met with Rev. Kevin a few times over the course of the year.

None of this would have been possible without the dedicated Chairs, leaders and members of the groups and Board involved in this area of ministry. It has been a privilege to work with all of them. I’d like to thank Ruth Knowles for her leadership as Chair of the Deacons; JoAnn Ward for organizing and coordinating Communion; Cheryl McKenney and Linda Sowa for coordinating the Hospitality/Fellowship time; the Usher Captains – Steve Payne, Kathy Nelson, Grant Dugan, Tom Irving and Sam Knowles; Pam LeBlanc and Terri Pattee for leading the Altar Design Team; Larry Dearborn, Chair the Audio Team; Barbara Papagian for coordinating the Parish Visitors; John Curtis, Chair of the Pastor/Parish Relations Committee; Ellie Stetson, Pam Leblanc and Tom Irving for supporting Barbara Papagian as her Members in Discernment Team; and for Sue Curtis, Matt Lyons and Rev. Kevin for supporting Emilia Attridge as her Members in Discernment Team; Linda Bonetti leading the Quilt Ministry with its new Dress A Girl project; Carol Soucy, for her leadership as Chair of the ONA Committee; and Jennifer Longval as the Chair of the Children/Youth Ministry Committee as well as her role as Chair of the Music Committee. Thanks also to JoAnn Ward, Jennifer Longval, and Joan Currier for serving as representatives on the Church Council from the Ministry of Spirituality area.

I am grateful to Rev. Kevin, Adam Peithmann, Kelda York and Barbara Papagian for their guidance and support throughout the year.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanine Finefrock, Coordinator of the Ministry of Spirituality

## **Worship Ministry Deacons Report Including Ushers & Greeters**

The Board of Deacons continues to develop and refine its role under the guidance of the Ministry of Spirituality. The main objective of this twelve-member board is to work closely with Rev. Pleas in organizing and planning worship services, preparing for and serving Communion, and assisting with baptisms. The Board of Deacons will continue to collaborate with the Director of Music Ministry, Adam Peithmann when choosing Advent and Lenten doxologies. As always, Adam's input is gratefully appreciated.

During the 2019 church year the Board of Deacons directed the following initiatives:

- Creating a unique Lenten experience for the FCC congregation, three Central High School classes and the Greater Manchester community by offering Rev Dr. Dirkje Legerstee's "***Angels in Human Skin***". This multimedia story presentation honors and remembers her parents', Ari and Anja Kuperman Legerstee, survival through WWII as Nazi War victims. In 1956 the Legerstee family came to Dover, NH, as a refugee family sponsored by the Dover UCC church. The presentation was held March 16-24th with Rev. Legerstee and Rev. Pleas leading worship on March 24th.
- Accepting the resignation of DT Lewis and with the Council's vote welcoming Samuel Knowles to the Board of Deacons.
- Supporting the ONA committee with their **Healing the Divide Gathering**.
- Sponsoring the **Songweaver's** concert on April 16<sup>th</sup>.
- Facilitating the setup and organization of the Maundy Thursday worship service.
- Participating in the Good Friday ***Walking with the Cross*** on April 19th with the Deerfield Community and Norwood UCC churches.
- Coordinating with the FCC Members of Discernment and the Women Connection's Reception team for Emelia Attridge's Ordination on November 17<sup>th</sup>.
- Honoring the **Dress A Girl Ministry** with a Blessing of the Dress A Girl dresses during worship.
- Continuing to faithfully serve both the Sanctuary and Chapel Communion services.
- Upholding prayerfully the monthly Prayer and Healing Service.
- Assisting Rev. Pleas with other special services throughout the church year.

One of the responsibilities that the Board of Deacons undertook at the end of the 2017 church year was combining the Greeters and Ushers into one team. During 2018, the Board of Deacons created a list of responsibilities for the greeters and ushers. Hence the ***Greeting as Ministry in the Life of Our Church*** became the official handbook. The handbook outlines the duties and guidelines for each Sunday team captain, greeter and usher.

In 2019, the Board continued to update the ***Greeting as Ministry in the Life of Our Church*** handbook and organized the second annual workshop breakfast for the Greeter and Usher Team. At the breakfast the duties were reviewed as outlined in the handbook.

The Board of Deacons wants to express their thanks to Team Captains: Steve Payne, Kathy Nelson, Grant Dugan, Tom Irving and Sam Knowles along with their greeters and ushers for their willingness to be the welcoming faces for our congregation each Sunday morning.

Most of all, the Board of Deacons want to thank Jeanine Finefrock, Coordinator of the Ministry of Spirituality, for her spiritual commitment, organization and leadership. Her guiding hands created a steady framework for a successful year.

Without the creativity, support and hard work of Front Office Assistant, Lauren Henderson, the Board of Deacons would not have been able to successfully accomplish the many initiatives listed in the report during the 2019 church year. Thank you, Lauren!

The Board of Deacons extends a special thanks of gratitude to JoAnn Ward, Communion Deacon coordinator, for all her work organizing the Deacons who serve Communion.

And a special thank you to Karen Hawver for acting as Scribe.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ruth Knowles, Chair

2019 Board of Deacons

Pip Adams, Lisa Allen, Craig Finefrock, Jeanine Finefrock, Karen Hawver, Tom Irving, Ruth Knowles, Samuel Knowles, Richard Nelson, John Rowe, JoAnn Ward, and Donna Willey

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## Greeters

*"Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers."* Romans 12:13

Thanks to all of the regular greeters who extend hospitality to members, friends, and guests each week. We also thank those individuals who served as greeters for special worship services and on special occasions during the past year.

As chairperson of the FCC Greeters since 2010, I have seen and felt the positive impact of friendly greetings as people enter our house of worship. I enjoy and am inspired by this role at First Congregational Church. If you'd be interested in serving as a greeter, please contact me by phone, speak to me on a Sunday morning, or you may also contact Ruth Knowles, Chair of the Board of Deacons. We invite you to get involved in this important aspect of our ministry to God and to each other.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ethel Parker

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## Open and Affirming Committee

*"With God's grace, we resolve to be an open, inclusive, affirming,  
and accessible community of faith."*

From FCC *Open and Affirming Covenant*, 2017.2018

First Congregational Church and our committee continued to live out and actively support the words of the Open and Affirming Covenant during 2019. FCC hosted *Healing the Divide*, the statewide **UCC Open and Affirming Spring Conference on April 6<sup>th</sup>**. The day-long event included a worship service, workshops, and a musical performance by NH Gay Men's Chorus. The conference also featured a poetry reading by award-winner, James Crews. Our own Open and Affirming Committee member and Church Treasurer, Jeffrey Frye, shared his vocal and composition talents, singing "We are Unbroken - Even After All" during the worship service.

The Open and Affirming Committee partnered with the Membership Team to sponsor and participate in the **Queen City Pride Block Party on June 15<sup>th</sup>**. The event took place in our church neighborhood – on Hanover St. between Union and Pine St. What a fun day, filled with a friendly, positive spirit! The weather was perfect, and hundreds of attendees visited over 30 booths representing local non-profits, businesses, and community organizations. We thank the group of FCC volunteers that shared our messages of welcome and affirmation with a steady flow of visitors throughout the day. We also extend appreciation to Lauren Henderson for helping us create FCC themed giveaways - water bottles and beautiful bookmarks highlighting FCC information on one side and words from the Open and Affirming Covenant on the other.

The church celebrated Thanksgiving Sunday and observed the second anniversary of First Congregational Church voting to become an Open and Affirming Church on November 24, 2017. Committee members participated in worship and led the congregation in prayer and a special litany, “The Good Word.”

Thanks to Linda Bonetti for enhancing the presence of the Open and Affirming Committee on the FCC website, with a link to committee news included on the website’s homepage. Thanks and appreciation are extended to committee members Kathy Alger, Bruce Attridge, Stephen Bearnse, Jeanine Finefrock, Jeffrey Frye, Karen Hawver, John Rowe, Kathy Rowe, and Bridget Thornton for their faithful service. The committee and our faith community were saddened by the loss of Michael Pugh in 2019. He shared his passion for education, inclusion, and volunteer service here at FCC and through his teaching at UNH-Manchester.

Open and Affirming Committee members look forward to the coming year, when we will focus on the words of the covenant’s second paragraph – asking ourselves and all of us to continue supporting current FCC efforts and consider additional ways to keep our promises to extend God’s love to **all** people. We are proud that this will be more than a committee effort. We plan to partner with other church committees and the congregation to live out and support these words inside and outside of our church walls.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carol Soucy, Chair

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## Communion Committee

The Sacrament of Communion is served to all who wish to receive it, following the tradition of our church. The elements served are non-alcoholic grape juice and bread, with a gluten-free option.

People serving Communion are usually current members of the Board of Deacons. They are aided as needed by the Communion Deacons, because once a Deacon, always a Deacon. They assisted Pastor Kevin Pleas and Commissioned Minister Barbara Papagian.

Communion was celebrated at the 10:00am Sanctuary service six times during the year, usually on the first Sunday of each new church season: Epiphany Sunday January 6th, the first Sunday in Lent March 10th, Easter Season Sunday April 28th, Pentecost Sunday June 9th, World Communion Sunday October 6th, and the first Sunday of Advent December 1st. On World Communion Sunday, a selection of international breads enhanced the bread element. Seven Deacons assisted serving at each Sanctuary Communion service. Communion by intinction was part of the March 6th Ash Wednesday and April 18th Maundy Thursday evening services, and was a main focus of the first Sunday of the month Chapel services on days there was no Sanctuary Communion service. One Deacon assisted the Pastor during these services.

It is an honor for all of us to serve the Sacrament of Communion. Thank you to all the Deacons for faithful service throughout the year. The people who contributed by preparing, serving, or bringing elements were Pip Adams, Lisa Allen, Craig Finefrock, Jeanine Finefrock, Karen Hawver, Tom Irving, Ruth Knowles, Sam Knowles, D.T. Lewis, Richard Nelson, John Rowe, JoAnn Ward, and Donna Willey.

Respectfully submitted,  
JoAnn Ward, Communion Committee Chair

## **Parish Visitors**

The Parish Visitors continue to connect with members of the congregation who are shut-ins, in the hospital, or at home with an illness or recovering from injuries. We make phone calls and send cards as well as visiting.

We hosted the Blue Christmas Service, taking part in the service and serving light refreshments after the service.

We partner with Outreach, the Meal Train and the Senior Board in delivering food and gifts.

We meet formally three or four times a year and are in constant touch via email, phone, and in person, keeping updated with our visits and names of people who would like visits.

Thank you to Lucia Carlisle, Becki Krueger, and Ruth Knowles for their dedication and concern for our congregation.

Peace and Blessings to all of you in the coming year,  
Barbara Papagian, Commissioned Minister of Pastoral Care

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## **Altar Design Committee**

2019 was again a wonderful year for the altar design team. The “summer flowers” volunteers did a spectacular job, the Thanksgiving display was nicely placed, and we had a good number of the spring lilies and tulips at Easter, as well as the poinsettias at Christmas.

Members of the committee this year included: Pip and Cecile Adams, Sue Clement, Joan Currier, Deana Dubois, Jeanine and Craig Finefrock, Lindsey Goodrich, Karen Hawver, Pam and Leo LeBlanc, Jennifer Longval, Peggy Neveu, Terri and Allen Pattee, Martha and Peter Perich, Liz Verity, Denise Beaurivage, Vicki Tinsley, and Christina Harwood. Special thanks to Peter for coaxing a bat out a window for us in November.

Many thanks to Sokhom Sar, Larry Dearborn, and Dick Jarvis for their continued support.  
Respectfully submitted  
Terri Pattee and Pam Leblanc, Co-chairs

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## **Quilt Ministry and Dress A Girl**

The FCC Quilt Ministry continues to work on lap quilts for our parishioners to brighten the day for our shut-ins and to offer a lasting keepsake for baptisms. Due to the overwhelming generosity of our congregation donating fabrics, in July we teamed up with Dress A Girl Around the World to create sundresses for girls at risk in underdeveloped countries. The dresses are delivered personally through mission trips, which we have coordinated, and there are strict construction guidelines. To date we have had 15 sewers join us on the third Thursday to create over 60 dresses and tshirt/skirt combinations; and we’ve been supported by dozens of friends and members who donated panties, pins and hairbands to send with each dress. It was a very proud moment for us at the September 29<sup>th</sup> “Blessing of the Dresses”! This batch of 53 dresses went to Zimbabwe with Sue Heppenstall, a nurse from CMC on a medical mission. We have also teamed up with Vision International Missions in Manchester and sent dresses to Ghana, Honduras, Haiti, and Guatemala. The dresses that accompany them on evangelical missions are part of our coordination effort with the Southern Maine/New Hampshire DAG chapter.

This ministry would not be possible if it were not for those individuals or groups who offer encouragement and support, secure the days to work, advertise the event, open the facility, set up tables and extension cords, haul out the stored sewing machines and fabric, donate beautiful fabrics, generously give monetary gifts, do the stitching, ironing and hand sewing, provide refreshments and warm, friendly fellowship and arrange for an opportunity to bless the final

products. As you can see, there are many who participate in this ministry. Thank you so very much! I appreciate and love you all.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carolyn Wilson, Quilt Ministry Coordinator

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## Hospitality Committee

The Hospitality Committee at First Congregational Church is a combined effort of many boards, groups, committees, and individuals to provide a Fellowship Hour after worship each Sunday. The Hospitality Committee schedules these groups on a monthly or weekly basis depending on the size of the group. The groups are responsible for setting up, serving, cleaning up, and supplying the food items and punch each week. Items such as coffee, creamers, sweeteners, etc., are part of the Worship line items in the budget. We are very thankful for these groups.

In the summer we ask individuals or families to sign up for individual weeks to bring a light, refreshing snack for Fellowship Hour. We are grateful to the people that volunteer to do this. We also have two angels that check and clean out the refrigerators frequently for us. Our thanks to them as well.

The schedule for 2020 is posted on the office window for everyone to check.

Many thanks to all that have helped with a successful year. A special thank you to Linda Sowa for her assistance. I truly appreciate it!

Respectfully submitted,  
Cheryl McKenney, Hospitality Chair

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## FCC Members in Discernment

*“Member In Discernment” Status is a Covenantal Relationship between a person on a journey toward Authorized Ministry, the Hillsborough Association, and the person’s local church.*

Two members of First Congregational Church, Barbara Papagian and Emelia Attridge, continued to pursue their respective calls to authorized ministry. During 2019, each of them achieved numerous milestones along their journey.

**Barbara Papagian** - At the beginning of the year, the NH Committee on Ministry approved Barbara as a Member in Discernment for Ordained Ministry. Barbara completed the process of applying to the Sioux Falls Seminary program in South Dakota to work towards her Masters in Divinity degree. She has been taking online classes and traveled to Sioux Falls in October for onsite “intensives” (lectures, classes, and workshops). She is currently in the process of taking a preaching class from New York School of Ministry. It has been determined that she is eligible to become ordained before completing her Masters in Divinity degree. She is hoping to be ordained in the Fall of 2020 or Spring 2021 at the latest. After Ordination, she plans to continue working towards her degree. During the year, Barbara led worship on ten Sundays; provided pulpit supply one time at Bethany Chapel and was on call for pastoral care for them for a month; assisted with Communion; performed one funeral; and led the Blue Christmas Service.

**Barbara’s FCC Ordination Support Committee:** Ellie Stetson, Pam LeBlanc and Tom Irving with Pastor Kevin as her Spiritual Advisor and Carol Soucy as her Personal Advisor

**Emelia Attridge** – An Ecclesiastical Council was held in the Sanctuary on Sunday, January 13th. Emelia was unanimously approved for Ordination pending a call. She then proceeded to circulate her profile. During this time, Emelia also served in a full-time temp position as acting minister at UCC Lexington until May. She also helped out at Judy Copeland’s church some Sundays in June

and July while Judy was on sabbatical. Emelia was offered and accepted a call as designated term minister of the First Congregational Church in Reading, MA. Her ordination and reception took place on November 17th. As of her ordination, she is no longer in the care of the Members in Discernment Team.

**Emelia's FCC Ordination Support Committee:** Sue Curtis, Matt Lyons, and Pastor Kevin

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanine Finefrock, Coordinator of the Ministry of Spirituality

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## Children and Youth Ministry

In 2019 the Children's Ministry Committee had 5 members: Lucia Carlisle, Scott Thornton, Kathy Nelson, Pamela Leblanc and Chair Jennifer Longval. We also welcome Ellie Stetson, Kelda York and Rev. Kevin Pleas to our meetings.

The Committee assisted with the planning of the June 2nd Children's Sunday Service (themed *Summertime*). We provided an Appreciation Breakfast for the teachers and cradle roll volunteers. Thank you to Kathy Nelson for providing an appreciation gift to all volunteers! We also hosted/provided an ice cream social during coffee hour for the congregation. Sandy Howard was kind enough to gift potted Marigolds to all the children in the congregation!

In November 2019, we held the annual Advent Workshop themed *Silent Night Holy Night*. A light lunch of soup, rolls and desserts was provided by the Committee while the tree ornaments were drying. Thank you to all the craft volunteers for being so creative with ornament ideas again this year!

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Longval, Chair

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## Pastor/Parish Relations

There were three meetings of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (PPRC) during 2019. One held in the spring and two in the Fall.

The committee is comprised of four church members: two nominated by Church Council and two chosen by Pastor Pleas. The four members are: John Curtis, Grant Dugan, Bill Jones and Carol Soucy.

The purpose of the PPRC is to provide a trusted channel for communication and feedback between the leader of our ministry, Rev. Pleas, and the collective body of the congregation. Where sensitivity of issues might otherwise deter open and direct dialogue, this committee is established to respond to concerns or issues that may emerge between our senior pastor and our membership. During the scheduled PPRC meeting, the objective is to address those issues or concerns professionally and thoughtfully so that Rev. Pleas is made aware and discussions transpire.

The congregation is encouraged to bring positive feedback and concerns directly to Rev. Pleas. When congregants are unable to do that, they are encouraged to speak with any of the PPRC members who will then facilitate the matter with confidentiality and promptness.

The PPRC will continue to meet bi-annually and on an as-needed basis. Our goal is to support and maintain open communication channels and an understanding between the congregation and our senior pastor. This has proven to be an effective mechanism in resolving interpersonal issues or concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

John Curtis, Chair

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## Audio Committee

*Mission – Provide the services needed to enable the congregation to be able to hear the church service and to record the service.*

It is the duty of the Audio Committee to set up the required number of microphones for the worship service each Sunday and record the service to make CD's for shut-ins or anyone requesting them. We also will record any other special services if requested. It is our pleasure to supply CDs of worship services and funeral services to the families.

The Sound System has been adjusted, as have the hearing devices, leading to a better hearing experience for the congregation.

Respectfully submitted,  
Larry Dearborn (Chairman) & Bob Koehler

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## Reports from the Ministry of Mission and Outreach

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The mission statement of FCC calls us to “embody the spirit of Christ through worship, service and fellowship.” The many committees and groups represented by this ministry provide both service and fellowship. They reach out to members of the congregation, to our Manchester community and to the national and international community. The many services they provide vary widely but all contribute to the mission of creating the beloved community. The individual reports of each organization will provide ample evidence of this.

Committees that serve our own congregation are an important aspect of outreach. They help to create a sense of fellowship, belonging and community in members of the congregation who participate. The Women’s Connection offers monthly activities for the women of the congregation that are eagerly anticipated. They also help to organize receptions at a number of events. The Senior Fellowship Board reaches out to the seniors of the congregation most notably in providing three luncheons per year at a local restaurant. The Book Club offers an opportunity to discuss books of interest. The Meal Train provides goodies and meals for families in time of need such as illness, or just to cheer up or thank someone. In November a men’s fellowship group was initiated by Peter Perrich. The group has had two breakfast meetings and plans to continue meeting on the third Saturday of each month.

Several committees offer an outreach to the wider community. The knitting and crocheting group provides hats and mittens to accompany holiday baskets for each child in the family as well as other items. This year they provided sets of hats and mittens to school children and to residents of a mental health residential facility, and several balaclavas to the New England Seafarers Mission. Outreach disburses funds provided by the annual church budget to local, national and international organizations such as New Horizons and Heifer International. They also provide volunteer services for a number of organizations and work with the Hallsville School to meet the needs of children there, particularly providing food for weekends and coats and boots for the winter. The food closet provides families and individuals with enough food for a meal. There has been an increasing flow of people requesting this service, especially mothers with young children. Donations from the congregation have helped to get the closet full. H.O.M.E provides volunteer services for a number of community organizations including New Horizons and the UpReach Therapeutic Riding Center.

The Membership Team provides outreach to both the congregation and to the community. Its focus is on encouraging more citizens in the community to consider becoming members and on

encouraging members to feel a part of our congregational community. For instance, cards are sent to members in certain circumstances such as illness or loss. Three members of the committee, as well as Rev Pleas and John Rowe, are attending for the second year a class on the 21<sup>st</sup> century church presented by the New Hampshire Conference. A survey was conducted of church members in June and showed significant progress from the same survey taken five years ago. A very productive all-church meeting was held to begin to build on the insights gained.

As will be seen in the reports below for the individual groups, the work of mission and outreach is alive and well at FCC. The activity level is reflective of a church that values itself, its members and the community, nation and world in which it lives and the God who is lord of all.

Respectfully submitted,

John Rowe, Ministry of Mission and Outreach Coordinator

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## **H.O.M.E.**

H.O.M.E. (Hands on Mission for Everyone) continues to provide volunteers from our church family for New Horizons/FIT (Families in Transition ). We do morning kitchen prep once a month and serve dinner twice a month. As of October we have started serving dinner at New Horizon's Soup Kitchen one night a month; and prepared and served dinner at Families in Transition another.....Taco Night is a big hit! Many of our volunteers are regulars, and others join when able. We have also helped on occasion with the New Horizon's food pantry.

Peggy Neveu and Liz Verity co-ordinate the FCC Meal Train, which provides a connection between those who receive a meal or special treat and those who prepare and deliver. Taking the time to say "we care about you" in this way is proving to be as rewarding for the preparers as it is appreciated by the receivers. We thank everyone who has provided food and/or delivered meals and goodie bags. In some cases, visits and meals are continuing beyond requests from the Meal Train. This year we have delivered 33 individual meals; 27 soups, cookies and muffins bags; and 23 cookie bags. The Meal Train collaborated with Women's Connection to decorate Valentine cookies, 30 of these bags were given out. We fostered being good neighbors with residents of the Gallen Apartments next door by giving them goodie bags, and this Christmas we gave cookie bags to the choir in recognition of the beautiful music they provide for us. THANK YOU to those who have become a part of this ongoing project.

In December, Terri Pattee organized a special outreach to help support Deanna Dubois with meals three times a week while she has treatments. Terri, Jennifer Longval and Peggy Neveu collected money and went shopping for Deanna, providing lovely gifts from her church family.

Meal Train volunteers provided dinner monthly during evening sessions at the UpReach Therapeutic Riding Center in Goffstown. This program is for families taking part in a 7-week program for kids who have been identified as having Adverse Childhood experiences (such as Abuse, Neglect, and Household Dysfunction). They attend the center after school, work with a counselor in a group workshop, and have the opportunity to groom and work with the horses, before joining their parents and volunteers for a family meal.

Morning Conversation with our ENA students has continued slowly and we have met just a few times this year. Student enrollment is down, but students and volunteers still get to enjoy conversation as we learn about each other and give the students the opportunity to practice their language skills outside of a classroom setting. Students and teachers welcome our involvement and find the sessions very useful. Volunteers also express they enjoy this great experience.

The Annual English for New Americans Dinner took place on Wednesday, December 11<sup>th</sup>. Our ENA students and their families, teachers and volunteers say the evening was wonderful. Thanks go to the many volunteers who did food prep in the kitchen, set the tables, did

the dishes, cooked, baked and served. Special thanks go to chef Judy DiNatale and to Lucia Carlisle who organized the serving of the food to around 70 students and family members. Rev. Pleas gave the blessing before the meal. Thanks also go to the Outreach Committee who donated grocery store gift cards which were used as raffle prizes. There were so many volunteers, and on behalf of the students and teachers I want to thank each and every one of you. You made this First Church tradition possible, sharing the blessings of this season with our new neighbors, which meant so much to them.

I am deeply proud to be part of this Congregation and am always amazed at the generosity of your hearts

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Verity, H.O.M.E Coordinator

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## Outreach Committee

*To worship rightly is to love each other, each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer  
– John Greenleaf Whittier*

The work of the Outreach Committee is to reach out to the community on a local as well as a global level. Members include Sam and Ruth Knowles, Marsha Neubert, Sue Clement, Devin Clement, Elizabeth Robertson, JoAnn Ward, Linda Bilodeau, Zane Knoy, Eric Gagnon, Karen Hawver, Sue Curtis, Carolyn Lane, Maggie Jespersen, Stephen Bearse, and Wilson Plamondon. Special thanks are extended to JoAnn Ward for her work as secretary, and Sam and Ruth Knowles for their work as treasurer.

Part of our work is to distribute the funds donated by the church to various ministries. Covenant ministries are ones with which we have covenanted a certain level of support. For example, we have been a long-time supporter of New Horizons, sponsoring and participating in the annual Walk Against Hunger, collecting food for the Religious Response to Hunger and the Souper Bowl. Similarly, we support the New England Seafarers Mission with funds as well as with volunteers. This year we have also provided ditty bags packed with essential items for those who work on cruise and merchant ships. Support ministries include a number of ministries to whom we donate, and a number of services that we provide to the community. A full list can be found in the Treasurer's report.

The committee monitors, to the best of their ability, the use of the money donated to organizations. In May we learned that Habitat for Humanity had decided to sell the Lowell Street house that they had been working on for three years without finishing the work. We had been concerned about the management of the project for some time and had discussed it with the executive director as it was to be abandoned. The committee decided to withhold funds until we had a chance to get a better explanation. A subcommittee composed of Sam Knowles, Karen Hawver, Marsha Neubert, Zane Knoy and John Rowe met with the executive director who was very open about the difficulties they had experienced and the steps they were taking to rectify the situation. The subcommittee recommended and the committee agreed that we send half the budgeted amount for this year, budget the full amount for next year but withhold it until another meeting with the executive director next fall. The rest of the budgeted amount was sent to the UCC for hurricane relief.

Another aspect of our work is providing services directly. The food closet has seen large increases in the number of people requesting food, especially among mothers of young children. Special mention should be made of the magnificent service provided by Lauren Henderson who greets those who come to request food. She treats them with dignity, kindness and respect. The

cost of this has been partially offset by an increase in donations from the congregation – we are very grateful to everyone who brings something in. We have also benefitted by being the beneficiary of the Hannaford Helps shopping bag program; during months when we are the designated recipient, we receive \$1 for every bag sold. We are concerned that we may soon have to either reduce the amount we give out or take funds designated for other purposes.

In February the congregation donated a record 1407 food items for the “Souper Bowl.” These were donated to the New Horizon’s Food Pantry, and the congregation was rewarded with two cakes baked by Ethel Parker. We also competed against other Manchester area congregations and were rewarded with a fruit bowl for having the largest donation. In November, John Rowe met with Rabbi Beth Davison who coordinates the project and discussed ways to get more congregations in Greater Manchester involved and increase the competition.

In the spring several members of the congregation participated in the Walk Against Hunger. \$760 was raised for Mothers’ and Fathers’ Day cards for the Church World Service collection. In the summer we celebrated Christmas in July at the Helping Hands Mission. We sang carols and gave \$20 gift cards to the residents. We participate in the Religious Response to Hunger in September, delivering three carloads of groceries in a caravan from Brookside Church to New Horizons.

The Angel Tree project, organized by Sue Clement, provided almost 150 gifts to individuals in the community, most of whom would not have had a Christmas present. We select the agencies we serve based on how great the need and these are the ones where the least has been available. For holiday baskets, we provided 15 \$50 gift cards with hats and mittens to families at local schools for Thanksgiving and an additional 15 gift cards at Christmas. In addition, gift cards were given to individuals connected to the church who are in need. Gift cards are given now instead of holiday baskets because many families, especially at the schools, will not have facilities to cook a turkey dinner and most will have access to a Thanksgiving dinner, but limited food for the rest of the holiday period.

Our relationship with Hallsville School, a school in Manchester with 70% of their children living at or below the poverty level, continues to grow and be productive. We continue to provide grocery store gift cards to be used for families experiencing hardship. The school administration distributes these judiciously to those in the greatest need. This year we participated in a program called Blessings in a Backpack. This national organization provides meals for a whole weekend every Friday to participating children who otherwise will not have food when school is not in session. The cost is about \$110 per child and provides meals for 38 weekends. The committee has covenanted to provide for 25 children, and members of the congregation along with friends of the school have contributed enough so that 6 more children can be served. We also provided a lunch at the end of the school year to thank the teachers for all they do for the children which was attended by many of those who have assisted in some way.

In the fall of 2017, we initiated a program to provide winter boots and coats to children at Hallsville who were without them. This year we were able to provide for 31 children who otherwise would have had to face the winter without them. We are especially grateful to those who took tags from the angel tree that requested coats. Without that we may not have been able to provide for all of the children who were in need.

Another initiative begun this year was to set up a fund to provide speakers of interest to the congregation. The first of these speakers will be Jason Sokol, a professor of history from the University of New Hampshire in Durham, an expert on the Civil Rights movement. The *Humanities to Go* program of New Hampshire Humanities has provided a grant for \$200 toward the total cost of \$325. The presentation is scheduled for Feb 2 at 11:30 AM and is co-sponsored

by the ONA committee and the Stewardship committee who have designated this as one of the Mind, Body, Spirit events.

The Outreach Committee is grateful to FCC and to all of the members of the congregation for the tremendous support we receive for our work. Together we bring God's love to those most in need of it. The committee chairpersons also wish to express our gratitude to all of the members of the committee who work incredibly hard throughout the year.

Respectfully submitted,  
John and Kathy Rowe, Co-chairs

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## **First Church Special Olympics Young Athletes Program**

The Young Athletes Program was first implemented as an outreach opportunity for First Church in the fall of 2018. The program is a weekly, one hour, sports-play activities event for children ages 2 to 7, with and without disabilities. The program engages children through developmentally appropriate play activities, involving gross and fine motor skills, designed to allow children to be active, have fun, and learn foundational sports skills.

The activities were created by specialists from the fields of special education, physical education, adaptive physical education, physical therapy and occupational therapy. Children develop physical, cognitive and social development skills – skills that are important on and off the sports field. The program follows an 8-week curriculum which introduces a different set of games and activities each week to help children develop strength, body awareness, spatial concepts, visual tracking, and how to follow directions. Studies have shown children participating in Young Athletes can make 7 to 9 months of developmental improvements in just 2 months.

We began the Fall Term in 2018 with 9 athletes and 12 church volunteer coaches, conducting the practice sessions in the church basement recreation room. The Winter Term of the program, beginning in January of 2019, saw the registration increase to 21 athletes and 18 coaches! The Spring Term, beginning in April 2019, showed further growth to 29 athletes and caused the relocation of the program from the church basement to the gymnasium at Smyth Road School.

The Fall Term of 2019 had 18 athletes, and we have found this to be a more manageable number of children, resulting in more effective instruction and involvement by the athletes. We continue to have 15 wonderful church volunteers as coaches who look forward to the weekly event as much as the children! We are now operating the Young Athletes program at the Manchester Community Music School gymnasium.

Students from SNHU have joined the program as volunteer coaches. Plans are underway to create an additional Young Athletes program on the campus at SNHU, which will be run by the students!

The Young Athletes Program continues to be a wonderful opportunity for First Church to offer an outreach program, while providing a much needed opportunity for children with special needs. Please contact Bill Jones if you are interested in becoming a volunteer coach.

Respectfully submitted,  
Bill Jones, Young Athletes Coach & Coordinator

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## **In-House Missions: Outside Groups Using the Building**

Our building continues to bustle with activity as it is an extremely valuable commodity to the community, and we have a tradition of being very generous in making our rooms available to outside groups provided their mission coincides with ours. This tradition strengthens the groups who benefit from the use of our building; however, even in the few instances when groups

contribute financially to the church, rarely does their contribution come close to covering our operating costs. Opening our doors to outside groups entails considerable coordination and accommodation from the staff as well as church members. We are all pleased to assist, in whatever way we can, but let us all be aware of this very significant area of church contribution to the life of the city as well as the Greater Manchester area.

**English for New Americans and Citizenship Classes:** Sponsored by Southern New Hampshire Services. We are a proud partner in this enterprise, which serves the Greater Manchester area. Barbara DelloRusso continues as Coordinator, and together with her dedicated staff, they do a remarkable job helping immigrants to assimilate into our society. The space for 12 English classes has been provided by FCC for 15 years now and this program continues to serve well over 200 foreign-born persons, Monday through Friday all year long. In addition to the English classes, the program includes multiple Citizenship classes, tutoring, “Welcoming Manchester” citywide and the FCC specific “conversation cafés”, and Manchester Adult Learner Services, coordinated by Pauline Choy who pairs trained volunteers with adult learners.

The 15th Annual ENA Holiday Dinner was held on Wednesday, December 11<sup>th</sup>, with 56 students and a wealth of volunteers attending. Thanks to Liz Verity for coordinating, and a big “thank you” to all of the church members who make this holiday dinner so popular every year by cooking and donating all of the fixings for a huge turkey dinner. The students expressed their sincere gratitude and appreciation that FCC is continuing this multi-cultural, holiday tradition. Southern New Hampshire Services offers a monthly building space donation to help defray costs.

**Korean Presbyterian Church:** For over seventeen years on Sunday afternoons, Pastor Jang has led a group of Koreans in worship, education and fellowship meals. Pastor Jang’s congregation may be small, but they are truly committed to their faith, and the members only use the building for their Sunday afternoon worship service and fellowship meal. We continue to provide the space to Pastor Jang and his congregation free of charge and I know we can all agree that it is always a pleasure being able to help our Korean friends. Pastor Jang has also expressed his deep gratitude for the giving nature and generosity of this congregation and his church does contribute to our church offering, which we do deposit as a building space donation.

**Alcoholics Anonymous:** Every Friday night AA meetings continue to be well attended in our dining room and these meetings have proven to be an extremely valuable and needed service to many individuals in and around the Greater Manchester area. D.T. Lewis is still coordinating the meetings with the help of volunteers and they all are doing a terrific job in running this very important program. We are more than pleased to offer our dining room free of charge to AA groups, however, as is part of the 12 Step Program, they insist on giving us a stipend regularly to help defray their costs. This contribution is deposited as a building space donation.

**Scouting:** All of our dedicated Girl Scout leaders deserve a huge thank-you for nurturing and grooming the young people of America who are the future! Girl Scout troops continue to use our space for their Tuesday meetings. Many thanks to Shayne Fritz and Deana Dubois for always coordinating their schedules with the Church office! Tuesday nights can be chaotic, but the Girl Scouts prevail! We do not charge any of the troops for their weekly meetings, but their contribution through various work projects within the church, and food closet donations, is more than enough payment.

**New Hampshire Gay Men’s Chorus:** It’s a joyous place on rehearsal nights when the NHGMC practice for the biannual extravaganzas! The talented group of performers is a welcome addition to the musical repertoire we are attracting at FCC. They offer a building space donation.

**Songweavers:** A new addition to our calendar, Songweavers women’s community chorus and drummers came together in April to raise the rafters at FCC! Our venue was perfect for them and we’ll be repeating it again in April 2020. We split costs to help defray our expenses.

**Manchester Choral Society:** MCS, with 60 singers and 20 musicians, rang in the Christmas season at FCC with two very successful concerts. A building use donation helps defray costs.

**“Angels in Human Skin”:** In March, Rev. Dr. Dirkje Legerstee presented her family’s voyage through the Holocaust to our congregation and to Central High School students.

**Special Olympics Young Athletes:** In our second year, the Special Olympics Young Athletes program for 2-7 year olds is in full swing! Students from SNHU have teamed up with over 15 volunteers from FCC, under the amazing leadership of Coach/Coordinator Bill Jones, to introduce these kids to an exercise program to teach team work and increase physical skills. Currently meeting at Manchester Music School on Wednesdays, 29 kids and their parents have participated in the 8-week sessions. The growth has been amazing...for all of us!

**Neighborhood Ministry:** Thank you to all who contribute to the FCC Food Closet so that we may help those less fortunate. The Outreach Committee continues to shop for food and supplies so we can keep our Food Closet well stocked. Thanks to the many groups who have collected food, and the individuals who “drop a bag” in the office or provide a gift card to Outreach for the purchase of food. This year visits have doubled! The Blessing in a Backpack program was initiated at Hallsville School, with 25 families receiving weekend food support through Outreach, and 6 additional families through FCC members’ direct support of the program. In addition, coats and boots were again given to needy Hallsville students. By teaming up with the Outreach Committee to support the Angel Tree, volunteering with Habitat, prepping and serving food at New Horizons every month, celebrating Christmas in July at Helping Hands, hosting the CAM dinner every October, preparing and serving monthly meals at UpReach Therapeutic Riding Center for the therapy group, bonding with Interfaith Women, joining in at the Neighborhood Block Party to support ONA, and distributing weekly donations of baked goods to ENA on Wednesdays, we ensure that those in need of physical and spiritual support will always have FCC to turn to.

**Miscellaneous:** The Chapel and the Sanctuary were used many times this year to celebrate weddings and showers, to honor loved ones with memorial services and funerals, and to present the Stewardship program “Mind, Body, Spirit...” inspirational topics, which included the History of FCC presented by Selma Naccach-Hoff and Instagram Primer by Lindsey Goodrich. Baptisms are generally incorporated into the regular worship service.

When we reflect on the activities and vast successes in 2019, I can’t thank everyone enough, staff and volunteers alike, for the synergy created by First Congregational Church...making the corner of Hanover and Union a beacon of love and support in Manchester.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Bonetti, Church Administrator



### **English for New Americans Program**

508 Union St., Manchester, NH 03104 603-361-2649

[bdellorusso@snhs.org](mailto:bdellorusso@snhs.org)

December 27, 2019  
First Congregational Church  
508 Union St.  
Manchester, NH 03104

Dear Trustees, Members, and Staff of the First Congregational Church,

This will be my fifth year here as Director of the English for New Americans program. My teachers, staff and I are very thankful for the FCC community’s thoughtfulness and kind words throughout the year.

As in past years, we've had successful church volunteer Morning conversation classes with our students.

The recent holiday party was well attended by teachers, staff and our adult ESL students and their guests. Liz Verity and her dedicated volunteers spread much cheer with wonderful food and coordinated teams to help the festivities be successful. The students greatly appreciated the gift cards and the time this group of volunteers took to make a fun evening for them.

Our ESL program has been very busy with expanded classes now at capacity. We hope to allow a number of people, on our wait list, an opportunity to attend classes during the winter months. Class size is always in flux with this special population.

Pauline, our Adult Learner Services Coordinator, continues to make connections with community volunteers to help students from the community needing HISET subject preparation.

Our ESL program also has occasional openings for consistent classroom volunteers, especially in our adult beginner classes. If you, or someone you know, is interested, please let me know.

A great deal of appreciation from all of us goes to Linda and Lauren who help with late student arrivals, students requesting information, and the ever changing collaboration on classroom scheduling. The flexibility and consistency of Larry and Sokhom helping with any program building needs are always appreciated.

We wish all of the FCC community a great year ahead.

Thank you with much appreciation,

Barbara DelloRusso  
Program Director  
[bdellorusso@snhs.org](mailto:bdellorusso@snhs.org)

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## **Membership Committee and Member Development**

The Membership Team continued to be very active in many facets of church life during 2019, as shown below.

### **Welcome Cards**

In April we removed the Fellowship Pads from the pews and replaced them with a newly created Welcome Card. The Fellowship Pads were introduced over 20 years ago and served to help identify names of people sitting in the same pew, and to communicate with the church office. Collection of the Fellowship Pad pages every Sunday by the Ushers was a tedious and cumbersome task. In recent times it was noted that most people know who is in their pew and therefore signing the pad for this purpose became unnecessary. The new Welcome Card allows members and guests to communicate with the church office, by simply filling out the card and either dropping it in the offering plate or giving it to an Usher. When the church office receives a card indicating someone is a guest for the first time, this is communicated to the Membership Team and a personal welcome note is sent to the guest. Overall the new Welcome Card has been a successful improvement in communications for our members and guests.

### **Orientation and New Members**

Orientation meetings for new members were held in April and October, followed by new members joining the church later in the same months. It is always a highlight of our year to welcome new people into the life of our church.

### **Young Athletes Program**

The Young Athletes program, which began in October of 2018, continues to be a very successful outreach and volunteer opportunity for our church. The program began with 9 athletes and grew to 29, causing the relocation from the church space to a school gym. Please see the Young Athletes program report for additional details.

### **Sunday News**

Our committee continues to send a card each week to whoever is mentioned in the Sunday News bulletin. We continue to receive positive comments from members saying how grateful they are to know we are thinking about them.

## **Name Tags**

Our committee members, along with the help of the FOO's, took on the task of updating the Name Tag display board, by removing inactive names and putting the names back in alphabetical order. The display board is located in the narthex.

## **SNHU Campus Ministry**

At the urging of Jon Colburn, we worked with the Rev. Bruce W. Collard, Director of Campus Ministry and Catholic Chaplain at SNHU, to show First Congregational Church on the school's website under the category of Religious Services Off Campus. Additionally, Lauren Henderson helped us create a First Church poster for display on the Campus Ministry Bulletin Board, which is a listing of local churches in Manchester.

## **Queen City Pride Event**

The Membership Committee worked in conjunction with the Open and Affirming Committee to establish a First Church presence at the Hanover Street Block Party in June. We staffed a booth in front of the church on Hanover Street, which provided water bottles and First Church brochures and bookmarks. We received many compliments for our attendance and support of this event.

## **Recognition Sunday**

Recognition Sunday was held on November 3<sup>rd</sup> as a way of celebrating all members of our congregation. We highlight our 25 and 50 year members, and give special recognition to 50 plus year members. A huge celebration cake was served at Fellowship Hour.

## **Creating and Leading the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church (CL21)**

In the fall of 2018, First Church joined 8 other churches in a two-year leadership development class offered by the NH Conference of the UCC. The program is designed to help churches develop strategies to cope with the challenges faced in today's society. The First Church CL 21 Team consists of Membership Team members Ellie Stetson, Lindsey Goodrich, and Bill Jones; Outreach Chair John Rowe; and Rev. Kevin Pleas.

The first year was curriculum based and offered topics such as adaptive leadership, communications, managing conflict, creativity and innovation. The program also provided us with a congregational assessment tool, known as CAT. We are now in the second year of the program which is a peer-focused cohort approach, allowing the individual churches to share their application of the concepts learned in the first year.

The CAT was well received by First Church members at mid-year, and we achieved a high input response rate to the survey. Feedback on the CAT survey results was presented at a well-attended meeting in mid-September. Following this, an all-church meeting was held after worship in late October to allow for discussion of the survey results and to begin the process of formulating action plans for future implementation. Additional opportunities for input and discussion by the congregation will be provided in 2020.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellie Stetson and Bill Jones, Membership Team Co-chairs

The Membership Team

Joan Currier   Marsha Neubert   Stephen Bearse   Pam LeBlanc   Liz Verity  
Lindsey Goodrich   Rev. Pleas   Ellie Stetson   Bill Jones

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## **Senior Citizens' Fellowship**

The Senior Citizens Fellowship Board continued another year of planning successful events.

The Spring Luncheon was held at the Manchester Country Club on May 14th. Pat (Walter) Heffernan and Patrick Keane sang Gaelic music and encouraged those in attendance to sing along.

The Fall Luncheon was held at The Puritan – Pappas Room on October 8<sup>th</sup>. Officer Nathan Linstad, a Safety Officer from the Manchester Police Department, gave a safety presentation on awareness and personal safety. Safety bookmarks, specific to each senior’s residence, were distributed to those in attendance.

The Christmas Luncheon was held at The Derryfield Restaurant on December 10<sup>th</sup>. Rob Dionne from the Majestic Theatre provided the entertainment. As is his style, he brought his humor into the entertainment singing familiar songs. The food, as usual, was delicious and the Raffle Ticket prizes added to the enjoyment.

On October 28<sup>th</sup>, Kathy Cook from Manchester Proud Visioning, spoke to the Board Members about a comprehensive plan to enhance the public schools. They are looking to see what changes can be made in the community which will help the students currently and in the future. The Board Members supported Manchester Proud’s program and offered their suggestions and opinions.

It has been the Board’s practice for many years that “Thinking of You”, “Get Well” and “Sympathy” cards be sent to our church members and friends. Also, the Board visited many of the elderly with gift bags filled with various items and a special Christmas Card made by Pam Leblanc.

The Board was responsible for Coffee Hour on October 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>.

Barbara Hebert resigned from the Board this year. We commend her for her choice in selecting the appropriate raffle gifts for the Christmas Luncheon in the past.

The Board will hold its 60<sup>th</sup> Celebration in May of 2020. Stay tuned for a memorable and fun event.

The Senior Citizens Fellowship Board Members include Kathy Payne (President), Elizabeth Robertson (Vice-President), Lucia Carlisle (Treasurer), Joan Currier (Corresponding Secretary), Nancy Simmons (Recording Secretary), Cecile Adams, Pip Adams, Marsha Neubert, Liz Verity, Donna Willey, Larry Dearborn, Steve Payne, Cal Bowie and Barbara Hebert.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kathy Payne, President

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## Women's Connection

*Women’s Connection Mission Statement: The Women’s Connection offers opportunities for the women and friends of First Congregational Church to experience social time together, to build connections and to strengthen friendships. We seek to encourage and support one another as we journey through life together at every season in our lives. All adult women are welcome to join us for whatever event interests them.*

Our activities are varied and have included outings, crafts, spiritual reflections, hiking and volunteering in the local community...something for everyone. Here is a monthly report of events from 2019.

**January-** WC Seventh Annual Game/Movie Day became Game Day this year. Seven ladies gathered in the recreation room on January 6<sup>th</sup> after church. We enjoyed soup, chili, sandwiches and desserts for lunch and had great conversations and laughs as we played several games. We started playing with “Right, Left, Center” and finished with “Sculptorades”. Both games were a lot of fun and made our time together pass too quickly.

**February-** On the 3<sup>rd</sup> we had a meeting to begin planning for the NHCUCC Spring Gathering that to be held on May 11<sup>th</sup>. We also supported FCC’s “Death by Chocolate” Murder Mystery Theater held on February 16<sup>th</sup>.

**March-** Our first St. Patrick's Day Breakfast was a great success. We had nineteen ladies who brought delicious food to share. Some of the recipes were from the "Bon Appetit" Cookbook. We enjoyed each other's fellowship with our guest speaker Emelia Attridge. She gave us a lesson on Celtic Spirituality and we learned how to make a St. Brigid's Cross using raffia. Also, Pam LeBlanc showed us how to draw Celtic Knots. We went away with talents we didn't even know we had. The "Bon Appetit" cookbooks arrived and were handed out to everyone who preordered. A great big thank you goes out to the Cookbook Committee for putting the time and effort into organizing the recipes and making all the deadlines to publish our awesome "Bon Appetit" book. The committee ladies are Denise Beaurivage, Ellie Campbell, Deana Dubois, Barbara Hebert, Pam LeBlanc and Vicki Tinsley. Thank you, ladies!

**April-** WC was in charge of Coffee Hour for Easter Sunday, April 21st and Sunday, April 28th. On the 28th we had a taste testing hour with delicious recipes from the cookbook.

**May-** We hosted the NHCUCC State Women's Fellowship Spring Gathering and Annual Meeting on May 11<sup>th</sup> when approximately 60 ladies gathered at FCC with a theme of EVERYDAY BRINGS NEW CHOICES. First everyone gathered in the dining room for registration and morning snacks. It was a time to meet new friends and for old friends to catch up. Staffed by Anne Crawn, the White Elephant table was set up with lots of interesting items. There was also a table for the sale of the "Bon Appetit" cookbook, which was created by the ladies of the First Congregational Church. Our hostesses for the day prepared most of the food served for the morning snack and the luncheon from the recipes in this cookbook. Seventeen books were sold that day. All the money is going to the future kitchen remodel project at FCC. At 10:00 a.m. everyone gathered in the sanctuary for Morning Worship Service. Barbara Papagian from FCC led us in worship with communion, and her sister, Kay Vercoe from Laconia, graciously offered to direct us in music. Carol Soucy from FCC sang a beautiful solo, "In the Bulb There is a Flower." This whole service was beautiful and meaningful. Rev. Tim Wildman, the keynote speaker, presented "Choices, Chances, Changes". He talked about how each one of us hears and sees things differently. He explained what might be a good choice for one, might not be the best for another, and remember to take chances and make changes as life goes on. We honored three Outstanding Women: Rev. Louise Bastille from Laconia, Kay Vercoe from Laconia, and Pam LeBlanc from FCC Manchester. In Elaine Barker's absence due to illness, Trudie Bergeron read the recognitions and Barbie Hazzard presented plants to these ladies. As we gathered back in the dining room for lunch, we listened to a short presentation about Dress a Girl Around the World by Linda Bonetti. There were dresses, blankets, and knit hats for babies on display. She explained how a church can host a "Sew-a-thon" by inviting sewers to make "kits" and sew dresses. If you have a quilting group in your church, you might want to do something a little different sometime and try these dresses. Check it out on Facebook at Dress A Girl Around the World/Southern Maine Group. Another project that is great and easy is Project 10,000 Partners for World Health out of Falmouth ME. They are collecting 10,000 flannel blankets and knit baby hats to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates in Africa. Linda also offered other ideas for fellowship through quilting and sewing groups to do mission work. After the luncheon, Margie Kreitler conducted the business meeting. The following officers were elected: Chair, Margie Kreitler; Vice Chair, Roberta Pratt; Secretary, Claudia Wright; Treasurer, Dot Pitman. There were two workshops in the afternoon. The ladies were divided into two groups with half going to "What's Up Doc?"—Aging Well by Dr. Lyn Singer Lindpaintner, and the other half going to "Qi Gong Moving Meditation" by Joyce Palmer. Everyone was able to enjoy both workshops, as after 45 minutes the groups switched places. Everyone enjoyed EVERYDAY BRINGS NEW CHOICES. The ladies left with lots of ideas on how to make the right choices as we get older, hoping to see them again at the Fall Gathering at Camp Sentinel, Tuftonboro NH on September 27–28th.

**June-** The 7th Annual MYSTERY RIDE was held June 1st. The weather was beautiful, the ladies were excited and our mission to collect food for the food pantry was greatly appreciated! We had a total of 26 ladies, in 5 cars, heading to our first destination in Rochester, NH: “Stonewall Kitchen Warehouse Store” on 7 Amarosa Dr; our second destination was off to South Berwick, Maine to a restaurant called Fogarty’s; then off to our third destination to “Wentworth Greenhouses” in Rollinsford, NH. The next destination was “Salmon Falls Stoneware” in Dover, NH just down the road from the greenhouses. We were lucky enough to have a personal tour and demonstration by Andy, the owner of the business. We were back in the cars, heading to church, so we thought of a fun surprise and stopped at “The Haven” in Epping for ice cream. It was a great treat to top off a wonderful day!

**July and August-** We took this time for much needed rest.

**September-** We had our 8th annual Kick-Off Pot Luck dinner. This was very successful. The food was delicious and we had good conversation discussing our upcoming events. We also passed out Christmas cards to sign and be collected for the Military. We collected 140 cards, which were delivered to Laura Landerman-Garber. She is the person that started this challenge. We also sent her \$25 to help with postage. If anyone wants to learn more, her website [www.militaryholidaycardchallenge.com](http://www.militaryholidaycardchallenge.com).

**October-** On October 13th, Sunday afternoon, nine ladies attended “The Wizard of OZ” at the Palace Theatre. This play was fabulous! It was the great OZ story with a twist of adult humor added.

**November-** WC went to “Time to Clay” in Nashua on the November 3rd. Some ladies tried their hand at glass fusing. Others did some painting on clay or both. Everyone had a good time making ornaments for the tree or a wall hanging. The items were left to be fired. Betsy Green drove down to collect them and delivered them to church for everyone to pick up.

**December-** The WC Annual College Cookie Mailing, Cookie Swap and Yankee Swap was well attended. We had nine ladies who came with cookies to enjoy fellowship and fun, three more ladies sent in cookies and we received one monetary donation. We arranged delicious cookies in Christmas tins for nine college students. The tins go inside a mailing box then all kinds of snacks go in for packaging along with a Christmas card from Women’s Connection. These packages mean so much to the students as they arrive just in time for college exams. As they open the packages and are enjoying the goodies they also know that people back home are thinking of them and care about them. This event will happen forever for that reason. Along with the college mailing we signed and mailed fifteen cards to members and friends that Barbara Papagian has in her care, to wish them a Merry Christmas.

**Women’s Connection Book Club-** This club is going strong, about 6-8 people attending. It is open to anyone interested in reading the book that the club chooses. Contact Barbara Papagian and watch for the book announcement and sign-up sheet on the church office window. The club meets about once a month on a Sunday afternoon in different places.

Denise Beurivage and I want to thank Terri Pattee for being our e-mail technician. She always comes through getting the news out to all the WC ladies. We also want to thank everyone for all the great ideas, for supporting WC and the events throughout the year. We look forward to more ladies attending and gathering together for fellowship and to grow in faith, and the camaraderie that we all enjoy.

Respectfully submitted,  
Pam LeBlanc, Co-chair

## Memorial Reception Team

The Memorial Reception Team is a group of eighteen people who can be called upon to organize a memorial reception here at the church. This year we were very busy.

On April 20th we hosted a reception for Michael Pugh. We worked with his sister, Susan Blanchard, to have all the details done just the way she wanted. She was very pleased with the way the dining room was set up. Susan chose Angela's Pasta & Cheese Shop to cater the event and we just needed to be there to help the caterers. They set out all the food and stayed for the full time and did the cleaning up of food. We just needed to clean up the kitchen at the end.

In July we gathered to host a reception for Betty McKinnon on July 16th. We worked with her daughter Gail Thomas to get all the details just right for the family. She chose Belmont Hall to cater. They came right on time with pans of food for us to display on dishes from our kitchen. She planned on 100 people and had plenty of food. Gail was very pleased with the way everything was orchestrated.

In July we also hosted a reception for David Gaudes on July 26th. We worked with his wife, Martha, to have all the details just right. She planned for about 100 people as well and also used Belmont Hall. Everything went well and the family was very pleased. We are ready to do more when the time comes around. If anyone would like to be a part of this team, contact Pam LeBlanc.

Respectively submitted,  
Pam LeBlanc

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## Interfaith Women of New Hampshire

*Our mission is to share religious beliefs, cultures and traditions with women of different faiths. In so doing our goal is to develop understanding and friendship among each other.*

*Our Website [www.interfaithwomennh.org](http://www.interfaithwomennh.org) and our email address [interfaithwomennh@gmail.com](mailto:interfaithwomennh@gmail.com)*

### EVENTS:

#### **A Book Discussion surrounding “The Prophet” written by Kahlil Gibran**

This well attended event, by people from diverse faiths, took place on Thursday, March 28th hosted by First Congregational Church, and facilitated by Selma Naccach-Hoff, English Department Head at Manchester's Central High School.

The book discussion was followed by social time and refreshments served by the ladies of First Congregational Church. A freewill offering was collected and donated to the FCC Food Closet.

#### **Human Trafficking : Hidden in Plain Sight**

On April 29<sup>th</sup> Interfaith Women of NH presented the NH Human Trafficking Collaborative Task Force for an educational event featuring Jasmine Grace, a human trafficking survivor, as keynote speaker. Following her presentation, members of the Task Force participated in a panel discussion taking questions from the audience numbering just over 200 women and men.

Following the event, Jasmine also autographed her book, “The Diary of Jasmine Grace”, which chronicles her journey to recovery from human trafficking and addiction. Book sale profits support “Bags of Hope”, a ministry with a goal to distribute necessities to homeless and needy women which was founded by the author.

The event took place at St. Catherine of Sienna Church, in their school auditorium.

### **Purposeful Faith: Pivotal Moments**

On Monday, Sept 23rd Interfaith Women of NH presented Purposeful Faith: Pivotal Moments. This well attended event, by people from diverse faiths, was hosted by Brookside Congregational Church, Manchester.

Three women who have different faith leadership roles were invited to speak about what brought them to those roles. The speakers were:

The Rev. Cynthia Bagley, senior minister at United Church Christ in Keene. Rev. Bagley, formerly of Manchester, who shared how a series of challenging events inspired her to pursue a career in ministry.

Major Armida Harper of the Salvation Army in Manchester presented to the audience how her life had unfolded to bring her to present day. Major Harper credited her parents, also of the Salvation Army, for the examples they set during her early years, and the opportunities she had to work abroad with children in great need.

The third speaker was Susan McKeown, A.P.R.N., author and cofounder of F.A.S.T.E.R. (Families Advocating Substance Treatment, Education & Recovery), a family-based response to substance abuse disorder.

The presentations were followed by a question and answer session, followed by social time and refreshment, served by the ladies of Brookside Congregational Church. A free will offering was collected and donated to Emily's Place

### **Holiday Joy – Voices of Young Women**

Masooma Athar, MD, a member of the leadership Committee of IWNH, facilitated our winter event, "Holiday Joy", on December 9th, at St. George Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Manchester. The program was designed to give voice to how young women from diverse faith perspectives perceive and celebrate traditional faith holidays. It was attended by a diverse audience of women.

As program moderator, Dr. Athar, a Manchester geriatrician, introduced four young women of diverse faiths aged 17-24 years old: a Muslim, two Christians, and a Jew.

Anna Hutchison, a Londonderry High School graduate and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, presented her perspective about Christmas.

Hasna Kara, a 17 year old Muslim teen who lives in Boston, spoke about the Muslim practice of Ramadan, 30 days of fasting, and the celebration of Eid al-Fitr marking the end of Ramadan.

The third speaker was MacKenzie Murphy, 22, a Roman Catholic who received the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry: Saint Timothy Award for her outstanding leadership and service to her church and community while in her teens. Her talk explored how Lent relates to one of the most joyful times in the Catholic liturgical year: the resurrection of Jesus Christ celebrated on Easter.

The final speaker was Avia Sagrone, an Israeli Jew. As New Hampshire's Shlichah, Avia connects with synagogues, Hebrew schools, and the public throughout the State to educate about Israel. She told us how Purim commemorates the saving of the Jewish people as recounted in the Book of Esther.

Each of the presenters and the audience took part in a singalong of seasonal music from each of their represented Faiths.

Each of our events includes a welcome by a member of clergy or lay leader in that community. We also take a free will offering at the events which is presented to a charity chosen by our hosts.

Respectfully submitted,  
Liz Verity, Interfaith Coordinator

## NH Conference UCC Annual Meeting

U.C.C. Delegates Kathy & John Rowe, Ruth & Sam Knowles, John Curtis and Rev. Pleas attended the 218<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the New Hampshire Conference, United Church of Christ, held on October 19, 2019 at the Grappone Conference Center in Concord.

The theme of the meeting was "Step up, speak out ... from complicity to courage." The meeting was opened by conference president, Neal Cass and followed by a worship service. The keynote speaker, Rev Traci Blackmun, Associate General Minister of Justice and Local Church Ministries and Senior Pastor of Christ the King United Church of Christ in Florissant, MO. She shared reflections on her life work and focus on communal resistance to injustice.

Tim Hughes, Interim Executive Director of the Horton Center reported that the Center broke even this year, but the future is uncertain and discussions are underway to consider combining efforts with Vermont and Maine.

A resolution was introduced calling on the New Hampshire Conference and all NH churches to gain awareness leading to advocacy and action regarding the urgent need to prevent nuclear war. The Back from the Brink Initiative resolution was adopted during the business meeting.

The Racial Justice Mission Group presented on the process of becoming a racial justice church.

Lunch included the opportunity to join a number of conversations and discussions during break out sessions.

The business meeting heard the treasurer's report and accepted the proposed budget for the coming year. Rev. Carolyn Keilig assumed the role of conference president for the next year.

Respectfully submitted,  
John & Kathy Rowe, Delegates

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## Report of the Representative of the First Congregational Church to the Elliot Hospital Board of Trustees

The Elliot Hospital has completed over 129 years of support to Manchester. It has done so as a non-profit acute care non-sectarian community hospital that has provided high quality critical medical services to the community while also providing over \$144 million in uncompensated care to the community. The First Congregational Church has played a key role in the Elliot Hospital from its inception. Mary Elliot was a congregant of First Church and established the Elliot as non-sectarian hospital in the city of Manchester. A member of the First Congregational Church along with representatives from four other downtown Protestant churches were designated to be members of the Board of Trustees of the Elliot Hospital.

The SOLUTIONHEALTH regional health care system the Elliot created with Southern New Hampshire Medical Center completed its first year of operation with great success. For example, significant upgrades were made to the EPIC electronic medical record system which will be integrated across both hospitals allowing patients to have ready access to different clinical programs at both hospitals. Also, the initial step of the planned cost savings are being realized.

Other significant Elliot events of the year include:

- The new Elliot Regional Cancer Center is in its final stages of construction. This center will integrate both radiation and oncology treatments in one advanced center so patients do not have to travel to receive the most advanced comprehensive cancer treatments.

- A new Emergency Room expansion has been designed and approved for construction. This expansion will relieve the congestion in the state’s busiest emergency room and provide significant improvements in care.
- Construction was completed on 14 additional single-patient rooms for post-surgical patients raising this number to 24.
- The Elliot continues to respond to the critical health needs of the community through a series of new initiatives including sponsoring a bike program with the City to encourage healthy activity by children, as well as sponsoring the creation of a Zen Den at the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Manchester to support the mental and physical wellbeing of school-aged children and teens through de-escalate techniques and a calming environment to support impulse control.

These events show the amount and quality of care provided to the community and the vibrancy of the Elliot Health System. We should be pleased that the medical and charitable mission that this church played a role in creating is still being filled with such dedication.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your representative to the Elliot.

Respectfully submitted,  
 Paul W. Hoff  
 Representative of the First Congregational Church to the Elliot Hospital Board of Trustees  
 Secretary, Elliot Board of Directors

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**Reports from the Ministry of Sustaining Our Church Home**

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**Board of Trustees**

The Board of Trustees oversees the fiscal health of the church and care of the physical building and property at 508 Union Street in Manchester, NH.

For 2019, the nine Board members were: Cal Bowie, Lucia Carlisle, Greg Goodrich, Charlie Goodwin, Allen Pattee, Kathy Nelson, Ron Poloske, Elizabeth Robertson, and Scott Thornton. Non-Trustees who regularly attend meetings of the Board include Rev. Kevin Pleas, Church Treasurer Jeffrey Frye, Building Manager Larry Dearborn, and Church Administrator Linda Bonetti. Scott Thornton served as Chair and Greg Goodrich as Vice-Chair.

The Church Treasurer, Jeffrey Frye, will provide information on the performance of church funds in his annual Treasurer’s Report.

During 2019, the Church was fortunate to receive a bequest from the estate of Rose Arthur, a long-time parishioner. Part of the bequest included Rose’s house in North Manchester as well as a portion of the rest of her estate. The Trustees and Church Treasurer oversaw the transfer of the house to the Church’s possession and subsequent sale of the house. The remainder of the estate is expected to be settled sometime during the first or second quarter of 2020.

Subsequent to the receipt of the proceeds of the Rose Arthur house, the Trustees agreed to undertake a rehabilitation of the stained glass windows of the church. The stained glass windows are an iconic feature of First Church and to prevent their deterioration and possible failure, a stained glass restoration specialist studio was contracted to repair, stabilize, and apply protective measures to all of the stained glass windows in the Sanctuary and the Chapel. This work is expected to be completed during the second quarter of 2020.

The Trustees also approved additional repairs to the church organ that were requested by Adam Peithmann. These include removing a windchest for repairs and repair slides and other items on some of the pipes. Adam will have more detail in his Music Director's Report. This work is expected to be completed during the first or second quarter of 2020.

The Trustees also approved repairs to a section of the north side of the roof. This work was completed expeditiously by the roofing contractor who happened to be working on the nearby Baptist church when our roof was failing in 6 places. We were very fortunate that we had funds available to apply to these repairs.

I wish to thank all the Board members for their work this year, including Lucia Carlisle for her insight, Jeffrey Frye for his execution in fiduciary responsibilities, and Linda Bonetti for her attention to details and faithful diligence as Administrator. I also wish to extend a special thanks to Ron Poloske who will be stepping down from the Board at the end of the 2019 term.

Respectively submitted,

Scott Thornton, Chair

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## Stewardship

The Stewardship Committee consists of the following members: Bill Jones, Elizabeth Verity, Sue Clement, Vicki Tinsley, Cheryl and Dan McKenney, Rev. Kevin Pleas as ex-officio member, Administrator Linda Bonetti, and Anita Wolcott. The committee meets monthly throughout the year to organize and prepare for the annual Pledge Campaign, line up the campaign's Stewardship Moments for four Sundays in October, and create value added "Mind, Body, and Spirit" workshops for the Congregation and guests.

In 2019 the actual total Pledges, Plate contributions, and Gifts received was \$193,923. The 2020 Pledge Campaign, "Weaving the Fabric of Life", resulted in Pledges even with last year's Campaign. We thank the entire Congregation for your continued support of First Congregational Church.

The Stewardship Committee also hosted two "Mind, Body, and Spirit" workshops in the fall of 2019. The workshops were held after Sunday Service.

1. "The History of First Congregational Church" by Selma Hoff, held in the Chapel
2. "Instagram Workshop" by Lindsey Goodrich, held in the Parlor

The Committee welcomes suggestions on topics that would be interesting to the congregation or guests. You can send your suggestions to Cheryl McKenney via email at "[djm2140@aol.com](mailto:djm2140@aol.com)".

In December, the Committee along with many other Church members, volunteered at the annual Salvation Army Toy Shop at the Doubletree Inn where thousands of toys were distributed to needy Manchester families for Christmas. This is always a rewarding experience. On behalf of the congregation, thanks to all who volunteered.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan and Cheryl McKenney, Co-Chairs

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## Scholarship Committee

The Scholarship Committee awarded Church Scholarships for 2019 in June. Funding for our scholarships is possible because of the Gordon P. Woolner Scholarship Bequest.

*The **Higher Education Award** is given to students who have graduated from high school who are continuing their education, whether or not they have received a Church Scholarship in the past. The intent of this award is to support our church*

*members as they continue to pursue their education either at college undergraduate or postgraduate level or in pursuit of certificates in job training programs.*

We had four students continuing their education who received **The Higher Education Award**. Each of these students are members of our church and were active participants in the life of our church in a variety of ways while they attended here.

**Connor Lyons** received the Higher Education Award. Connor had just completed his first year of the Doctorate of Physical Therapy Program at Springfield College. This is a six-year program. He has a desire to ultimately open his own Physical Therapy clinic, so he is also working toward a Business Administration Minor. Connor planned to play on college baseball team in the fall. He hopes that his education will provide him with a strong foundation for business success as he helps others to overcome their physical challenges. In the future, he plans to continue to be involved in a church and work with youth to help get them involved with their community and church family as his father does now.

**Summer Gagnon** received the Higher Education Award. Summer attends Utica College where she is preparing to earn her Bachelor's Degree in either Cyber Security or Criminal Justice. As she continues her education, she plays on the women's soccer team and is a member of the Utica College Mock Trial Club. Summer plans to use her degree at a state police department, a federal agency, a private company, and/or a member of the military.

**Amelia Cote** received the Higher Education Award. Amelia has completed her undergraduate education at Saint Joseph's College in Maine where she majored in Biology and Secondary Education. She is continuing on to receive her Master of Science Degree in Education at Saint Joseph's. While in college, Amelia served as the vice president at the pre-professional Science Club, worked as a nanny every day after school, completed three internships, and substituted at the local high school. Her plans for the future include teaching secondary science, which she is now doing, becoming a principal and eventually a superintendent.

**Margaret (Maggie) Thornton** received the Higher Education Award. Margaret attends Norwich University in the Bachelor of Science Biochemistry Program. She is part of the Norwich University Regimental Drill Team, Norwich Christian Fellowship, is a member of the American Chemical Society and the Tri-Beta Biological Society. She will be commissioning into the United States Army upon graduation as a second lieutenant, making medicines for soldiers both at war and on U.S. soil.

Congratulations to all of you!

***The New Chapter Award** is given to a church member who has decided, long after high school (and perhaps college,) to take a new road in life entering a "New Chapter" of life that requires further education.*

We presented Barbara Papagian **The New Chapter Award**. Barbara, after achieving her status as a Commissioned Minister in Pastoral Care just a short while ago, has decided to continue her schooling toward Ordination.

She is enrolled in The Masters of Divinity Program at Sioux Falls Seminary in South Dakota. Most of her work will be done through online courses and seminars, and she is required to attend a number of seminars at the school. Students from all over the world attend these weeklong seminars.

Here at church as a Commissioned Minister, Barbara assumes many responsibilities in worship and leadership as she continues to provide pastoral care and visitation to so many of us.

Barbara hopes to continue her work at First Congregational Church in Manchester and perhaps become an Assistant or Associate Pastor with us upon her Ordination.

Congratulations, Barbara. You are an inspiration to all of us.

Respectfully submitted,  
The 2019 Scholarship Committee  
Peter Perich  
Lucia Carlisle  
Ellie Stetson

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## **Building Manager's Report**

The following report is a summary of the more significant projects that have been worked on during 2019:

- The following work was done by Lachance Plumbing & Heating. Leaking expansion joint replaced in room B15. Two leaking expansion tanks in boiler room replaced. Leaking irrigation pipe repaired. Drainage pipe in boiler room repaired.
- Room 201 renovated, walls and woodwork painted, new flooring installed, new drapes hung.
- Roofing on north side of building replaced by Rowland Roofing.
- Carpet cleaned in rec room, 1<sup>st</sup> floor offices and hallway.
- Stained glass window repair and renovation contract signed with Associated Crafts/Willet Hauser. Work scheduled to start in April after the Easter season.
- Installation of new wireless fire department communication system installed by Johnson Controls, mandated change by Manchester Fire Department.
- Fluorescent light fixture bulbs replaced with LED bulbs (550 bulbs total) and the lenses replaced in the kitchen.
- Sound system problems fixed by Power Sound of N.E. (Hearing assist devices, 3 stage microphones and recorder sound level adjusted).
- Weather stripping on the new Narthex doors has been adjusted by Northeast Door.
- Three 30" shop fans were purchased for the sanctuary.
- The staircases to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor were painted with OSHA approved paint by Sokhom.
- We received a \$1186 rebate from the replacement of the Narthex doors and used the money for additional maintenance and repairs.

I greatly appreciate the support that I receive from all the volunteers, they make a large difference in the appearance, comfort, usefulness and safety of the Church building and its surrounding grounds, for the benefit of all that come here

Respectfully submitted,  
Larry Dearborn, Building Manager

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## **Grounds Care Report**

- Lawns mowed weekly during growing season. Sokhom Sar provides this crucial service including trimming and edging. The new electric starter mower with double blades does a fine job.
- Yard waste is bagged and left for pick-up as needed.
- Lawn fertilizer applied as needed.
- Lawn aerated and grass seed applied early fall.
- Spring and fall grounds clean-up performed by volunteers including George Shepherd, Bob Koehler, Steve Payne, Larry Dearborn and Dick Jarvis.
- Bumper crop of acorns this year! A treat for our squirrel family!

- Thanks to Kathy Nelson, a member of the Bedford Garden Club, for her care of the three large urns. She uses artificial flowers for Easter, annuals for summer, mums for fall, and greens for winter.
- Sokhom hangs the three large wreaths with red bows at the three main entrances for the winter season.
- Rainmaker continues to service our irrigation system with spring turn on and fall turn off, and making any necessary repairs.
- Giant Landscaping continues plowing and salting of driveway as needed during winter months. Sokhom does the walkways and steps with the church snowblower.
- Dick Jarvis continues to do daily pick up and disposal of trash and debris off the church grounds.
- All perennials cut back during end of growing season. This vital job is provided by Steve Payne and Dick Jarvis.
- The memorial plum tree near the Union Street entrance did not survive the winter and was removed.
- The Memory Garden continues to flourish with ongoing care during the growing season. Special thanks to Noel Villiard and Liz Verity for keeping this area special with annuals planted to add color with the perennials. Please stop by for a reflective moment during your church attendance.
- The Building and Grounds Committee wishes to thank all volunteers who help keep the church grounds clean and neat at the corner of Hanover and Union Streets, our FCC Home.

Respectfully submitted,  
Richard W. Jarvis

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## **Memory Garden**

The Memory Garden continues to provide a reflective space for all members and friends, and adds to the beauty of our historic church building. Our garden provides a peaceful place in the heart of the city where you can take a few moments to sit and reflect, especially during stressful and difficult times.

This year annual plantings were added in the spring. Thanks go to Larry Dearborn, Dick Jarvis, Steve Payne, Pam Leblanc, Sokhom Sar and Noel Villiard (friend of the church) all who helped with the weeding and fertilizing, keeping the garden weed free and looking beautiful. Noel also donated many plants

Thanks also go to Pam LeBlanc who entered the names of donors and those honored by donations into our perpetual “Memory Book” as a tribute to our loved ones. The book is on display in the Sanctuary and will be updated each year.

This is one of the ways you can honor your loved ones, and we will gladly accept future donations to enhance the plantings and continue to maintain the garden. Donation slips are available in the hallway on the table opposite the Parlor door.

It has been an honor to work with those who graciously give of their time and energy to maintain this lasting memorial, and thank you notes have been sent to both donors and volunteers. The names of those who were honored by a donation are as follows:

## 2019 Memory Garden Donations

Donated By	In Memory Of
Elizabeth & John Verity	"Our Mothers" Eunice Cowen & Margaret Verity
Richard W. Jarvis	Michael Pugh
Women's Connection	Wesley Belisle
Donald & Diane Clark	Polly Phillips
Edith Bowen	Polly Phillips
Ronald & Cynthia Comeau	Polly Phillips
Greater Salem Chamber of Commerce	Polly Phillips
Steve & Kathy Payne	Stephanie Whalen
Sharon Ebol	Bill Beidler
Cindy (Tibbetts) McNally	Janie Tibbetts

Respectfully submitted,  
Liz Verity, Chair

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### **FOO'S (Friends of the Office)**

The FOO's always stay busy! Every month we collate the "Window" (put it together, fold, label and sort for mailing) to get it in the mail for you all. We go round and round the table putting it together and getting caught up in each other's daily happenings. If there are extra mailings, we all come down and have an enjoyable time together as we work. And most months we celebrate our success with a special treat shared with the staff!

Thanks to all of our very reliable and fun-loving group: Joan Currier, Donna Willey, Carol Klardie, Betsy Gaston, Carol Forest, Nancy Simmons, Diane Brown, Joann Van Horn, Kathy Rowe, JoAnn Ward, and myself, Pat McCarrick.

Respectfully submitted,  
Pat McCarrick, Coordinator

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