



July & August 2021

Ripples & Reflections Reflections

By
Senior Pastor
Rev. Kevin
Pleas

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

— Matthew 6:19-21

Dear Friends,

I've been thinking a lot about beginnings and endings lately. No surprise there. These last pandemic months have been a watershed experience for many of us. We can't yet see how it will all play out, but I suspect, going forward, we will always think of ourselves in pre- and post-pandemic terms: how life was, and how life has come to be.

It's always tempting to hang on to things, isn't it. When good things come along, it's only natural that we would want to make them permanent. But the Buddhists are right when they say that nothing in life is permanent, and that we create a great deal of suffering for ourselves by clinging to the past. Jesus knew this as well. Treasures on earth will always be subject to moths, rust and thieves. We can see this as a cause for sadness if we like, but the deeper truth is that things must go by so that we may have room for what comes next. Much of our sadness is simply that we are trading a known treasure for an unknown one. But if we can cultivate a trust in the Giver of all good gifts, it makes it easier to look forward to what might be coming. That unknown future might well include new experiences of love and joy, assuming we keep our hearts open.

In the meantime, the trick is always to enjoy what we have while we have it. In these last weeks of my ministry with you, I find it easy to be grateful for our time together. We have shared friendship, good work, meaningful worship and a strengthening of our congregation. We have faced the

demands of the pandemic faithfully, and are emerging from it with a renewed sense of grace and purpose. And even though our paths are moving in different directions, our time together has set us all up for what is to come in a good and healthy way. I will miss the ministry we have shared, but I will continue to treasure my memories of it, and of you all.

As I write this letter, I'm down to the last two weeks of Morning Watch, the last three sermons, the last worship service I will need to prepare, at least for the foreseeable future. I'm looking forward to our soft reopening on June 27th, to our online worship on July 4th, and to my last Sunday with you on July 11th. I hope those of you who are able will join us, especially for the live services. It's quite something, after all these years, to be so close to retirement, and I'd love to have you present to celebrate with me.

After all these years of preaching, I can't help offering a closing thought. Love has always been a top priority in my ministry, and I was delighted to receive the following poem a few days ago that captures the importance of love so beautifully. It was written 1000 years ago by the mystical poet Ibn Arabi, and I'll leave you with it, at least for today.

*There was a time I would reject those
Who were not of my faith.
But now, my heart has grown capable
Of taking on all forms.
It is a pasture for gazelles,
An abbey for monks.
A table for the Torah,
Kaaba for the pilgrim.
My religion is love.
Whichever the route love's caravan shall take,
That shall be the path of my faith.*

Yours in Love and Grace,
Rev. Kevin



Happy 4th of July!

The Church Office will be closed on
Monday, July 5th in observance of
the Independence Day Holiday.

Senior Moments

With Rev. Barbara Papagian

Summer is here and usually things wind down in the summer. Committees don't meet, the church office closes early on Fridays when possible, and life just seems to slow down a little.

This year is different, though. Our church is going to be gearing up, starting with services in the Sanctuary on a few Sunday mornings throughout the Summer! It will also be different because Kevin will not be with us after July 11th and I will be leading worship as well as some pulpit supply ministers and one or two of our own church family members.

We will have an interim minister starting in September, who will be leading us through the transitions of opening the church and selecting a new Senior Pastor. Our lay leaders and staff will be working very hard to make these transitions as smooth as possible and we are all open to your questions, suggestions, and concerns as we proceed.

Thank you all for the cards, gifts, and well wishes for my Ordination. I am overwhelmed with the support you have all given me and I look forward to serving you as your Associate Pastor.

Some of you have asked what you should call me now. Please keep calling me Barbara, or Barb, or Bo....I answer to them all. We will keep the titles for when I'm wearing my robe.

I have had two weeks of restful vacation and I hope that all of you will take time this Summer to enjoy some rest and maybe some travel.

I wish you a safe and happy summer.
Rev. Barbara Papagian, Associate Pastor

Children & Youth Ministries News

During the summer, the Cradle Roll room will be open but not staffed with volunteers. If you wish to use Cradle Roll, the room is open and the service is broadcast through the speakers in the room so you don't miss anything. The room has been cleaned and disinfected prior to service. On the counter you will see a container of disinfectant wipes. Please wipe down any large items that were used before leaving the room. Cradle Roll will be cleaned and disinfected before each in-person service.



Friday Link Submissions!

We are always looking for interesting stories, poems, appropriate jokes, favorite quotes and family or vacation photos, to add to Rev. Barbara's *Friday Link Newsletter*. Reach out to her if you would like to contribute!

Upcoming Worship

Sunday, July 4th 10:00 AM

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Worship Service on Facebook

Sunday, July 11th 10:00 AM

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Rev. Kevin's Farewell Service & Piper Goodrich Baptism
Worship Service in person & filmed for later posting

Sunday, July 18th 10:00 AM

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Rev. Barbara Papagian Leads Worship on Facebook

Sunday, July 25th 10:00 AM

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Rev. Barbara Papagian Leads In-person Worship

Sunday, August 1st 10:00 AM

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Guest Worship Leader

Sunday, August 8th 10:00 AM

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Rev. Stephen Cushing Leads Worship on Facebook

Sunday, August 15th 10:00 AM

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

Pip Adams Leads In-person Worship

Sunday, August 22nd 10:00 AM

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Rev. Barbara Papagian Leads Worship on Facebook

Sunday, August 29th 10:00 AM

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Rev. Gordon Rankin Leads In-person Worship

Upcoming Committee Meetings

- Mon. August 9th @ 6PM—Stewardship Meeting
- Tues. August 10th @ 2PM—Connecting the Congregation
- Sun. August 15th @ 1PM—Open & Affirming Committee
- Weds. August 18th @ 6PM—Reopening Task Force
- Weds. August 25th @ 9AM—FOOS to prepare September Church Window Newsletter
- Mon. August 30th @ 6:30PM—Deacons' Board Meeting

There will be an All Church Picnic on Sunday, September 12th! We are in the planning stages of this event and will be looking for help. Please check upcoming Friday Link and Sunday News for more details!



News from FCC Outreach

July & August 2021



Thank you to all those who participated in the Church World Service Mother's Day

Blankets and Father's Day Tools Events!

FCC donated a total of 58 Mother's Day Blankets and 38 Father's Day Tools. Thank you to all for your generosity!



Hallsville Farewell!

The Outreach Committee held its final end-of-school luncheon for faculty and staff at Hallsville School on June 17th. This has been an annual event for several years to thank them for their

service to the children. This year's lunch featured chicken tenders from the Puritan Back Room and cookies from members of the committee. For the last five years we have partnered with the school to benefit children in need.



Our assistance has consisted of emergency grocery money in the form of gift cards, weekend food programs, a coats and boots program that has provided for every child identified as in need with a winter coat and pair of boots. We are proud of what has been accomplished and sad to see the school closing.



Bakersville School News

The Outreach Committee has met with Bakersville social workers, Danielle Longo and Kate Kelly. Danielle works with the approximately 300 students at the elementary school and Kate with the 90 students at the Bishop O'Neil Center Preschool. They identified their biggest immediate needs are for booster car seats

for the preschool and emergency grocery store gift cards.

On Monday we delivered 4 booster seats and 10 \$50 Market Basket gift cards. We will be talking to them again before school starts this fall to explore

ways to grow a partnership similar to the one we have enjoyed with the Hallsville School.



Children's Book Drive for Elliot Hospital

Thanks to everyone for your generous donations of books for the Elliot Hospital Book Drive! We received 70 books and Outreach will be tripling the number so the total to be donated is 210! Again, thanks to everyone who participated and made this wonderful event such a success.



Ruth Knowles, John Rowe and Karen Hawver seen sorting the donations on June 14th.

"Movie Club" Returns Friday, August 6th at 9:30 AM!

In this fun take on our Bible Study, we will discuss a movie we watched during the week. Each Friday we will choose the next movie to watch from a list we have made. Call Rev. Barbara Papagian at the church office (625-5093) for more info & to be included!



PICTURE DIRECTORY PROJECT

Church Photo Directory



The Membership Team is pleased to let you know we are working on a directory that will be distributed this fall. Our 2021 Picture Directory will be a much less formal project, not something where portraits are taken and you can then order prints from the portrait company. Our intent is to make a simple directory using pictures we take of ourselves so that we can put a face to a name. We are asking Members and Friends of First Church to take their own "selfie" pictures and email them to Lauren Henderson in the church office at:

LHenderson@FCCManchesterNH.org

Pictures can be of individuals, couples, or families – it's up to you. If you have problems with this approach, such as an older cell phone or no cell phone at all – you can stop by the church office from 10 to noon during June or July, and Lauren or Linda will gladly take your picture. Give them a call at 625-5093. If that is not convenient for you – please call Bill Jones at 603-860-1236 to discuss coming to your home to take the picture. If you do not wish to have your picture in the Picture Directory – that's fine – just drop Bill Jones an email to tell him you are not interested – wjones0615@comcast.net. When the directory is finished, we will ask people to pick up a copy during worship or at the church office, as this will save us the expense of having to mail them out. The Membership Team will also help in delivering the directories to those people who cannot pick them up. Your cooperation in making this project a reality is most appreciated!



Open and Affirming Committee News Summer 2021

"It's so important for the church (not just FCC) to be present at such an event. The message that God's love is meant for all is so important."

Volunteer Jim Fogle, referring to the Queen City Pride Festival June 2021

June 19th. Queen City Pride Festival.

What a day full of reminders of Jim's message. The twelve FCC volunteers talked with hundreds of attendees that day, and we heard numerous expressions of thanks from members of the LGBTQ+ community, their parents, and friends. We also saw several people in tears, as they shared difficult, emotional stories of their life experiences related to not being welcomed or accepted, feeling different, and sadly, being shunned and ostracized from their own church communities.

You'll be glad to know that many attendees looked at our posters and print materials and recognized our beautiful church building on the corner of Hanover and Union. We invited everyone to visit us online and to join us when we return to in-person services. One of FCC's own, Rev. Emelia Attridge visited our booth that day and shared encouraging thoughts. She said that... *even if no one from the festival attends FCC, our presence was a powerful ministry to those who have experienced so much rejection.*

The powerful stories shared at Queen City Pride reminded me of church musician Mark Miller's stories from his *Draw the Circle Wide Zoom* event. If you haven't had a chance to watch it,



please see the Vimeo video on the FCC website. Click this exact link, <https://vimeo.com/554087615>. During his presentation, Mark asked us the question that he and others ask themselves at his home church in Summit, NJ, "Is there room for others in our welcome?" Mark added that he believes deeply that "all kinds are parts of a whole."

Mark also told a personal story that has messages for all of us. He was invited to speak and perform at a conference featuring contemporary, conservative church music, and confessed that he was somewhat apprehensive attending as a gay, black man. He shared how moved he was when a youth choir performed his anthem, "I Believe." The generous welcome of the choir and the conference leaders reminded him not to judge others and to respect everyone's common humanity. Miller believes that God is calling us, too – to open our minds and be in dialogue as we face challenges to change and grow in our faith communities. He makes an important point that... "a dialogue is about *both sides* coming away changed."

We will continue to hold the stories we heard at the Queen City Pride Festival in our hearts, and strive to mirror Mark Miller's passion, faithfulness, and hope at FCC – to help change the world...and build God's beloved community - extending welcome and love to all.



The next meeting of the Open and Affirming Committee will be on **August 15 at 1:00 pm** (tentative). You're welcome to join us. Please contact Carol Soucy carolsoucy@comcast.net or call 603.591.6387.

Open and Affirming Committee

Elizabeth Blood, Jeanine Finefrock, Jeffrey Frye, Karen Hawver, John and Kathy Rowe, and Carol Soucy, Chair



Women's Connection News Summer 2021

Women's Connection just completed our 9th Mystery Ride on Saturday June 5, 2021. There were 15 ladies in 6 cars traveling to Bedrock Gardens in Lee, NH.

Everyone arrived at 8:30 am in the church driveway to meet and greet each other and deliver 114 food items for the food pantry. A BIG THANK YOU to Rev. Barbara Papagian for making a special trip to church to unlock the door so the food could be put inside before leaving on the mystery ride. Marsha Neubert and Carol Ann Howe each brought in 15 items which was the top number. Thank you ladies!

The drivers were excited and waiting patiently for the directions to our first destination, Bedrock Gardens. Once the drivers knew

where to go everyone got in the cars for a 9:15 am departure. We arrived in the parking lot at 10:00 am and were greeted by the friendly volunteers who are the heart and soul of how the Gardens operate. It is a nonprofit and is financed by admissions, donations, grants, and memberships. A little history of the Gardens... It was an aban-



andoned dairy farm when purchased from Annie Piper in 1980 by Jill Nooney and Bob Munger. They designed, built, and maintained the garden themselves until the Friends of Bedrock Gardens was formed. The sculptures on the property are Jill Nooney's (with a few exceptions). If interested visit bedrockgardens.org to learn more. We had fabulous weather for walking through the beautiful gardens and viewing the sculptures. Everywhere you turned there was another picture that had to be taken. Maybe of a pond, a waterfall, or a tea house, the beautiful scenery was endless.

Once everyone returned to the entrance, the drivers were given the second set of directions to our lunch destination, The Beach Plum in Epping, NH. If you are yearning for a lobster roll and ice cream this is the place to go. It was wonderful to be out with each other and to catch up on lost time while enjoying the delicious food. The ice cream was to die for! From here we headed back to Manchester to rest after a busy day... Time to plan for next year!



Meal Train News!



"Happy are those who will feast in God's Kingdom."

Luke 14:15

Chug a Chug a Choo Choo...! Thanks to all our Meal Train volunteers, who cooked, baked, wrote notes and sent birthday cards during the pandemic, and helped to provide a connection between all of us.

It's inspiring to see how our community worked together to put smiles on so many faces. Meal Train Volunteers have been busy providing friendship, connections, and caring between us all.

Last month we made our 4th delivery of cookie bags to UpReach Therapeutic Riding Center for their "Caring Connections Outreach," and to-date FCC has contributed 1100 cookies to their program! This program was designed to combat compassion fatigue for front line workers who have been caring for our community for the past months of the Covid pandemic.



Brand new Scholastics books have been donated by Tiny Tot's Preschool in Auburn to First Congregational Church. These will be given to UpReach Therapeutic Riding Center for kids ages 8-17 years who are

taking part in their *Resilience Reins* program. This is a program for kids at risk in the city and we look forward to providing a meal or two each session soon, as we have done in the past.

Goodie bags of special treats have also been delivered to members who perhaps have been more housebound as a result of Covid, with a smile and an opportunity for a quick chat. It has been very good to stay in touch.

We have been providing a weekly meal to John and Sue Curtis as Sue navigates her cancer journey, and we are pleased to report that she has completed her chemo treatments, and has started radiation. She is feeling really good and is optimistic about her progress. She is once more enjoying cooking on her days off. Your love, caring, prayers and COOKING have really helped her through this part of her journey back to health.

Please let us know if you are aware of anyone who would benefit from receiving a special treat, some soup or cookies, or maybe a meal. Our aim is to provide some extra TLC to our friends and members in times of need, whether they just need a little company or to know that they are in our thoughts.

Helping out with the Meal Train can mean cooking a meal, soup or a treat such as cookies, brownies or other homemade sweet, or delivering a meal package. If you would like to help out and have not yet done so, contact Liz or Peggy who will get in touch with you when the need arises. The beauty of having a good number of volunteers is that you can always feel free to pass for another time. We are blessed by the dedication and service of our FCC congregation. Contact Peggy Neveu (frannys1@aol.com or 483-8388) or Liz Verity (liz-v@comcast.net or 623-7461) to suggest a name or add your name to the volunteer list.

Only with your help can this project be successful!

Memory Garden News



What a wonderful Team we had working in the memory garden on May 24th! Larry Dearborn donated and delivered the bark mulch, and the whole

team worked hard not only in the memory garden, but all of the church gardens. Bill Jones edged the lawns, while others weeded and spread mulch.

"Thank you's" go to Larry Dearborn, Karen Hawver, Bill Jones, Pam LeBlanc, Steve Payne, Peter Perich, Kathy Nelson, Sokhom Sar, Carole Valavane and advisor, Dick Jarvis.



Two hydrangea trees were planted on June 1st! They have blossoms already and hopefully will be beautiful. Thank you to all those people whose donations this



year have supported our Memory Garden. To honor those whose memory you treasure, with a monetary donation, you can send a check to First Congregational Church, with the "Memory Garden fund" in the memo line. Should you wish to honor a loved one by your donation please specify their name, which will be recorded in the Memory Book.

Holly Berry Fair News

Excitement is building with the plans being made for the Holly Berry Fair!



This all-church event is being planned for November 20th, 2021. (Keep your fingers crossed!) Revisions have been made to accommodate more social distancing and the consolidation of tables for an easier flow of people.

Morning workshops have been scheduled for July 15th and 22nd from 10AM—12PM in the dining room. There is a limit of 12 people per the Re-Opening Task Force rules. There will be tasks for all - those with special skills and those who just want to help with very simple items. Please watch the Women's Connection emails for information. Come to see your friends, laugh with them and help make the Fair a success in community participation! Please mark the July dates in your calendar – also August 5th and 19th!

If you volunteered to head a table or assist someone either Pam or Peggy will be contacting you to confirm your participation this fall. We look forward to having everyone's participation. If you want to help or have questions, please contact either Pam LeBlanc (blanclp@comcast.net) or Peggy Neveu (frannys1@aol.com). We are thinking positive about this year!

2021 FCC SCHOLARSHIPS ANNOUNCED

Scholarships Presented on Sunday, June 6, 2021

The Scholarship Committee is pleased to announce the Church Scholarships for 2021. Funding for our scholarships this year is possible because of the FCC Scholarship Fund, the William P. McGuiness Scholarship Fund, the Virginia Smith Scholarship Bequest, and the Gordon P. Woolner Scholarship Bequest. We are very pleased to make these awards.

For Our High School Graduates

FCC Senior Scholarship Awards

Ethan Krueger

Ethan will receive The First Congregational Senior Scholarship Award. Ethan graduates from Bow High School. While in high school, Ethan has played football for 4 years. He has wrestling, and volunteer coaching for youth basketball and football. At church growing up, Ethan has participated in Sunday school, the cherub choir, and confirmation class. He liked hiding Easter eggs on the church lawn for the younger children. He is accepted at Endicott College in Beverly MA for the fall, and hopes to become a Physical Therapist or an Actuary.

Garrison Gagnon

Garrison will receive The First Congregational Senior Scholarship Award. He transferred from Manchester Central High School to the Holderness School in Plymouth NH. He will graduate from the Holderness School where he has been part of the varsity lacrosse, hockey and cross-country teams. Additionally he has been part of outreach programs sponsored by the school and served as senior dorm leader his senior year. At church over the years, he was in the Cherub Choir, the children's hand bell choir, and the Carol choir. He performed in Christmas pageants. He has been accepted at Johnson and Wales University in Providence, RI. Garrison's planned course of study is in Physical Therapy/ Personal Training/ Nutrition Science with a likely goal of a Masters in Physical Therapy.

William P. McGuiness Award for a High School Senior

Ethan Lyons

Ethan will receive the William P. McGuiness Award. Ethan graduates from Memorial High School. This special scholarship award was set up by the youth group (Phi Kappa) for deserving high school male students in memory of William who was a member of their group who died in an accident while traveling home from college. Ethan has demonstrated outstanding engagement at his school and at our church. He has been part of the Latin Club, the positivity Club, and DECA at school. Here at church, he has participated in Sunday School and Youth group, and has helped out at holiday activities, helped teach Sunday School, and helped at New Horizons, and the Young Athletes Program. Ethan will attend the University of New Hampshire in Durham in the Paul School of Business to earn a degree in Business and Management.

Higher Education Awards

We have six students who are continuing their college education and will receive **The Higher Education Award**. All 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. Essays written by each of the scholarship recipients will appear in this edition of the Church Window. Please enjoy reading them.

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.

Our College Undergraduate Students

John Thornton

John receives the Higher Education Award. After a year at Manchester Community College, John will transfer to the University of New Hampshire where he has chosen to major in Neuroscience and Behavior.

Margaret (Maggie) Thornton

Margaret receives the Higher Education Award. "Maggie" will be a senior at Norwich University in the fall. She still hopes to transition into the US Army where she can help soldiers work back to full health, achieving their physical and mental health goals. Additionally she plans to work as a certified personal trainer at an athletic development facility to help young athletes and to coach high school soccer.

Emma Green receives the Higher Education Award. Emma is enrolled in the liberal arts program at Manchester Community College where she is close to finishing her Associates Degree for Liberal Arts. She plans to enroll in the teaching program there so that she can earn a teaching certificate and ideally get a degree in education to become a high school teacher.

Our Post Graduate Students

Jennifer Irving receives the Higher Education Award. She is attending Suffolk University Law School and is currently finishing up her first year as a law student with all the challenges of Covid 19. She is enrolled in a three-year program there. This fall she will be teaching Constitutional law to high school students through the Marshall Brennan Constitutional literary Project. Over the summer she has a judicial internship at the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts in Boston. Her interests include Immigration Law and Constitutional Justice in Schools.

Continued...

Abby Curtis

Abby Curtis continues her education for a Master’s Degree in Piano Pedagogy at the University of Southern Maine. She is totally immersed in music in multiple ways, including teaching at the Community Music Center in Portland, for her own personal enjoyment, and has occasionally prepared videos for our Sunday worship services. Abby works at a group home for adults with disabilities and makes and sells masks on Etsy.

James Irving

James receives the Higher Education Award. After graduation from Gordon College and work in the mortgage industry for three years, James has decided to pursue a career in the world of academia. He is enrolled at UNH in a PhD program in history

to pursue a career in college teaching.

The essays are all very amazing and we welcome you to read them over the summer.

Congratulations to all of you!!!
We wish you all the very best.

The Scholarship Committee
Peter Perich
Dawn Gagnon
Lucia Carlisle
Ellie Stetson



2021 FCC SCHOLARSHIP ESSAYS

Essays from our High School Graduates – Scholarship Awards

Funded by the FCC Scholarship Fund, The William P McGuiness Fund, and the Virginia Smith Scholarship Bequest

Ethan Lyons – Memorial High School - attending UNH in the fall – The William P. McGuiness Special Award!

Ethan Y. Lyons While attending First Congregational Church my entire life, I have learned a substantial amount of lessons and Christian values that encouraged me to be a positive individual. Ever since I was young, Sunday school taught me bible stories, and often persuaded me to exhibit the Christian learnings in my daily life. I have learned how to love others, help less fortunate people, exhibit a forgiving spirit and be a welcoming person.

First Congregational Church has taught me what it means to receive love and to express love. The various church gatherings such as Youth Group, Sunday school, and the many clubs opened my eyes to how important it is to feel a sense of belonging. The prayer concerns that occur every Sunday morning showed me how much the church cares for one another and how important prayer is in one's life. I have personally witnessed this love during my surgery in 2007. The church sent me many cards and letters that were delivered by Reverend Judy Copeland. I still remember how comforted I was when I received them. Being a Christian, I have learned the im-

portance of giving back to people who are in need. Whether it was through the community service opportunities or Sunday school discussions, I have learned the positive impact of helping others and expressing hospitality. Many youth group activities such as raking leaves for the elderly really opened my eyes to what it means to be a helpful individual. Treating others with a welcoming attitude is meaningful because it allows people to feel included. I have seen this personally from the church when they allow all people of different backgrounds to visit, and the open and affirming aspect as well. I also learned forgiveness, and how valuable it is to understand that everybody makes mistakes, including myself. It is important to have empathy for others, and to understand the circumstances where someone may be coming from. The way I live my life and express myself has a deep impact on others.

While at school and in my future, I will continue to follow Christ and display the Christian learnings that I have obtained while attending First Congregational Church. I will continue to volunteer for those in need, and I will always display a helpful and loving temperament. I am extremely thankful and blessed to have the Church family supporting me through this very important period of my life.



Ethan Krueger – Bow High School – attending the University of New England in Maine in the fall – The FCC scholarship Award

Throughout my whole life I have been learning values of the church. I went to church from when my mom brought me as a baby to be baptized all the way until I was confirmed at this church. Many of the values and lessons I have learned throughout my childhood have come from this church through my experiences with Sunday school class and more. I have

learned to always help others, how to show honesty, integrity, acceptance, loyalty and commitment.

I have kept all of these values in mind while considering what I would like to do in the future. I think the career path I am interested in very much aligns with some of these core values. This year has been a very tough year for me as it has been for everyone else, but dealing with Covid during my senior year was not easy. *Continued...*

On top of that I tore my ACL and meniscus during one of my games in the fall. The injury required surgery and severely affected my mental and physical health. It became very hard to stay positive and lay down all day, unable to see friends, play sports, and just be outside, all of the things I enjoy most. However, one person that truly made an impact on me during this time of struggle was my physical therapist.

Because of the positive impact he had on me, I would like to have that same impact on others in a similar career. The main value of this career is helping others, as I have always tried to do. A career in the medical field gives many opportunities to be someone who can have a positive impact on another person. My major goal is to make sure nobody goes through a similar experience alone.



Garrison Gagnon – Manchester Central/Holderness School – attending Johnson and Wales University – RI in the fall – The FCC Scholarship Award

Attending the First Congregational Church my whole entire life has given me a practice that dictates my everyday life. I am very involved with sports at my high school that have a large team with many different positions. From a very young age at church I have been taught to engage in conversation and to understand one's life story to deepen my connection with the individual and entire community. As assistant captain this past season, a value like this holds tremendous weight in sports as it relates to the team. Outside of sports the virtue of community and the need for a kind mentality helped me be elected by my school community. I was elected Job leader my junior year and house leader my senior year. The effects of the FCC's community support has helped me to prosper and I plan to carry it on as I

travel from the Holderness School to Johnson and Wales University and beyond.

Faith has played a huge role in the decisions I have made leading up to this point in my life. Knowing that God will carry me through always affects my decisions. I currently attend an Episcopal school whose motto is "For God and Humankind." I chose this school because it gave me the opportunity to explore another religious perspective, continue my faith, and further my involvement with the community. It is a close-knit community and with that comes the strength of your involvement with one another. The relationships that I have formed with individuals around the world demonstrate that community can be built on not just a local but a global scale.



Essays from the Higher Education Scholarship Recipients

Funded by the Gordon Woolner Bequest

Our College Undergraduates

Margaret Thornton

Fifteen years of schooling has come and gone, with one final step before entering the "adult" world. As I enter my senior year of college, I find myself looking more to the past than focusing ahead on the future. Fondly, I remember the times that my best friends and I would go tearing through the halls, laughing and giggling as we played tag or hid from teachers so we would not get in trouble. I remember being scolded by those teenagers who were so much more mature and doing some of the scolding as I became more grown than those younger than me. I would sit and study while having a snack, before being pulled away to play a few random games or watch a movie. And I remember practicing until I could get every note right, until I had memorized each part of a musical number, and until our pieces sounded good enough to play in front of a crowd.

I am not remembering my times at preschool, at elementary, or even junior high. Instead of thinking back on kindergarten through eighth, I am instead remembering my time as a kid at First Congregational Church. My best friends were the two that I was in Sunday school with from the time we arrived at FCC until we were confirmed. As many will remember, we did play tag and kickball in the lovingly nicknamed "Wreck Room", until one of our parents or someone else's would scold us- the teachers

that we hid from. Then, we adopted other games, like Hide and Seek or ping pong, until even those became too competitive for some.

As we grew older, so did the toddlers and infants that were younger than us, and we found ourselves in the same shoes that the Youth Group had been in only a few years previous. We, too, scolded them for playing too loudly or too competitively, jumping in to play if they needed some help or if we just wanted to have fun. And when they needed a bail out because something had broken, we were there to either cover for them or to fix it while no parents were looking. We studied in eighth grade- not math or science, but the textbook for confirmation.

We read each story over and over, trying to grasp what we had known since we were in the small kids' classroom, but something that I personally would not realize until I was in college. That lesson was that our church is a family. The community support I received from every member in the congregation was overwhelming. When I felt that I could not talk to my parents about something, there were always other parents that I was safe talking with. Sometimes the advice ended up being "talk to your parents about that", but often I had multiple options to choose from. And everyone was so excited to hear about what me and my siblings were up to, whether it was with school, sports, or anything my eight-year-old brain was infatuated with at the time. At any time, I had a big group of kids that would be willing to play, and I always had someone older than me to keep me safe. The unconditional love and support from

Continued...

our church family was incredible, and I wish I could go back to live it all over again.

As each day passes, though, I am reminded that time cannot move backwards, and that the future is as soon as tomorrow. So instead, I focus on what comes next, and how I can apply unconditional love, support, and compassion to what I do next. This past year at school, thanks to the church scholarship I received last year, I was able to purchase all the textbooks I needed. Junior year was the most difficult academic year I have faced while in college, but I was able to achieve a 3.65- the highest semester GPA I've earned while at Norwich- which brings my cumulative GPA to a 3.1, the highest cumulative GPA I've ever had in college.

This fall, I will be taking the same number of classes as I go for both my senior seminar and a third Strength and Conditioning certification. My goal is still the same: To commission into the US Army and help soldiers work back to full health, achieving their physical and mental goals. I have the opportunity to begin that training early, learning how to do exactly what I will be doing once commissioned. For my senior year, I will be designing and enacting physical training plans and nutrition education for members of the Corps at school, as well as those

cadets in the Army Department at Norwich. I am incredibly thankful for both of these opportunities, as they will help me to show compassion and kindness to more individuals and support them through their journeys as they become healthier, happier versions of themselves.

Upon graduation, along with commissioning and serving in the US Army, I plan on working as a certified personal trainer at an athletic development facility. I hope to help young athletes reach their full potential to have a greater opportunity to succeed in their sport, or even to just be happier and more confident in their abilities. Along with this work, I am hoping to coach high school soccer, a dream that I have had since I was twelve.

Until May of 2022, however, I will stay focused on classes and training so that I can reach my goals. This gives me the chance to work with more people, continually showing the patience, kindness, compassion, and support that I have received from my church family. And thanks to FCC, I can do just that.

Very Respectfully and with Much Thanks,
Maggie Thornton



John Thornton

I cannot thank the Scholarship Committee enough for awarding me the scholarship last year. After attending Manchester Community College, I have made the decision that I would like to do something that I can be proud of everyday, and have chosen to transfer to the University of New Hampshire. I will be attempting to transfer each credit I earned that was possible by the church, and I once again cannot thank everyone enough.

In regards to what I will be studying, I have chosen to major in Neuroscience and Behavior, where I hope to discover what makes each brain fundamentally the same, and yet completely different from one another. It is because of the scholarship that I was able to first attend Manchester Community College, and being able to transfer to a completely different university to study in a program I can be proud of is something I will never forget.

Thanks to the scholarship I was awarded, I was able to complete



my first two semesters of college completely debt free, and I currently have a 3.94 GPA. After completing these semesters however, I came to realize that I enjoy working on cars as a hobby, and not as something I have to worry about making money off of. With this newfound information, I set out in search of a program that I was interested in, and came across the University of New Hampshire's Neuroscience and Behavior program. I am currently in the process of transferring into their University and they will accept as many credits from my time at Manchester Community College as they can.

Without the members of the church guiding me through all my years, I would not be the person I am today. which I am extremely thankful for. I believe that this program will bring me something to take pride in, and something that I can be happy doing everyday. I am excited for the future, and am thankful for the incredible generosity of the church and its members.

Thank you all once again, John Thornton.

Emma Green

I am currently attending Manchester Community College. I am in the Liberal Arts Program, and I plan to go into teaching. I am close to finishing my associate's degree for Liberal Arts. I am taking classes this summer as well to quicken the process. With COVID – 19 still lurking in our everyday lives, I have had to adapt to online schooling that has proven to be difficult, but I have kept my faith through it all.

When I taught Sunday School at FCC throughout high school, I realized I really enjoyed teaching. It was a great starting point for me to get to know what teaching is like. I learned what it was like to run a classroom and interact with the kids. I am

planning on enrolling in the teaching program at MCC so I can earn my teaching certificate. As for what I would like to teach, I'm still not quite sure. I enjoy many different subjects so it will be a hard decision when the time comes that I have to choose. I am still going to be working so I'll continue to learn how to balance both work and school.

Ideally, I'll get my degree in education and become a high school teacher. Again, I'm not quite sure what I want to teach. Possibly history or psychology. FCC is the place where I found what I wanted to do in life, and I'll be forever grateful for the opportunity to teach Sunday School.



Our Post Graduate Students

Jennifer Irving

The past year has been an interesting one to say the least, and a very unique time to start law school. The first year of law school is a notoriously stressful experience in normal times, and the added challenges of the past year made it all the more so. I have attended classes online via Zoom, as well as some in person, following strict requirements on mask wearing and regular COVID testing. I took exams from my apartment and presented my first oral argument while wearing not one, but two face masks. Some days I had to take breaks from my homework to check in on friends and family members who had tested positive for COVID-19. In short, I do not know how I would have survived the past year without my faith.

From growing up at First Congregational Church, I have always felt secure in the knowledge that there is a God who loves me and created me with purpose. FCC also introduced me to various tools that have helped me turn to God in challenging times, including favorite prayers and Bible verses. I have thought often this year of the famous verse from Jeremiah 29:11 “‘I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” I

continue to derive comfort and strength from lessons learned at FCC, including the knowledge that despite anxieties big and small – from a global pandemic to the law school grading curve – God has a plan.

Despite the challenges of the past year, I continue to feel confident that God’s plan for me includes law school. I’ve learned so much about everything from contracts to property law to the U.S. Constitution, and about accomplished lawyers who are doing inspiring and meaningful work. At the same time, I’ve also read cases like *Dred Scott v. Sandford* that serve as a reminder that lawyers don’t always get it right, and that there is always more work to be done. With all the knowledge I’ve gained this year, I continue to be hopeful that a career in the law will enable me to live into the values learned in my religious upbringing and, in some small way, work to create a more just and Christ-like world. Though I’m not sure exactly what I want to do after law school, I am excited about the opportunities to come. Having completed the standard first-year curriculum, next year I am looking forward to taking classes that more closely align with my interests, including Immigration Law and Constitutional Justice in Schools. I am excited to see what God has in store as I continue my law school journey.

Abby Curtis

It took me a few months to find my passion in pursuing higher education. After completing my undergraduate degree, I decided I was done. After that, I was finally going to live my life, no homework, no classes, I would be free! Fast forward a year later and I am back in school, now working towards my master’s degree. I made my decision to continue with school before COVID-19 happened and once everything went online, it felt almost... pointless. I lost my motivation and interest for a few months and was feeling really lost, again. It took a lot of effort to find my path this time. This effort consisted of therapy, emotional piano lessons, finding inspiration through television, music, and friends, and trying really hard to love myself.

Looking back from where I am now, I’m really happy with my decision to keep going to school. Without the experiences I’ve

had these past few months, I’m not sure my self-esteem would have seen the light of day anytime soon. From my perspective, school is such an empowering experience. I find myself being challenged through piano every day of my life and I wouldn’t want it any other way. Without the scholarships I’ve been blessed with these past few years, I most certainly would not be where I am today. The generosity I’ve been granted from organizations like the First Congregational Church has made it possible for me to continue doing what I love, and for that, I am forever grateful. As far as the future is concerned, I haven’t gotten that far yet. After I complete my master’s degree in the Spring of 2022, my plan is to just see where life takes me. My only request is that I am involved in music in some way or another, whether that be through teaching, performing, or alone time at the piano every day.

James Irving

My experiences at FCC and Gordon College form two of the most important influences on my identity today. Growing up attending FCC and participating in youth activities strengthened my spirituality and gave me a supportive community of friends and mentors. The church has always provided a safe place for me to feel welcomed and valued. It helped me develop a love for humanity that has come to fruition in my historical research. FCC was also foundational in establishing my college career. Had I not attended several Passport camps hosted at Gordon College when I was in middle and high school, I can confidently say I never would have chosen that small, Christian school for my undergraduate education. FCC thus first introduced me to the institution that cultivated my love of history and provided relationships with peers and faculty that continue today. I could not be more grateful for this special connection between

my church and my education.

Classes at Gordon sharpened my inquisitive mind and introduced me to the exciting rewarding world of academia. Following graduation, I know I wanted to become a permanent member of that environment by completing a PhD in history and pursuing a career in college teaching. I entered the program at UNH in the fall of 2020 and today I know I am in the right place. Having worked for three years in the mortgage industry between Gordon and UNH, I know what it is like to “work for a weekend.” Now as a student there are many nights when I do not want to stop working out of pure enjoyment. My plans for the future are to complete this program in five years, after which I will apply for full time teaching positions. I love working with students and being an integral part of their college experience. — Thank you for the opportunity to apply for this scholarship and for your consideration.

THIS MONTH AT FCC

ACTIVITIES, DATES AND TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. PLEASE REFER TO THE PRINTED CALENDARS BY THE OFFICE OR GO TO
WWW.FCCMANCHESTERNH.ORG

JULY

Thursday, July 1st

9:10 AM "9:10 Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

10:00 AM Service Recording in Sanctuary

Friday, July 2nd No Church Activities Scheduled

Saturday, July 3rd No Church Activities Scheduled

Sunday, July 4th

10:00 AM Worship Service on Facebook

Monday, July 5th

Church Office Closed for July 4th Holiday

(Filming for the week of 7/18 will take place this week)

Tuesday, July 6th

10:00 AM Staff Meeting

Wednesday, July 7th No Church Activities Scheduled

Thursday, July 8th

10:00 AM Service Recording in Sanctuary

Friday, July 9th No Church Activities Scheduled

Saturday, July 10th No Church Activities Scheduled

Sunday, July 11th

10:00 AM Worship Service & Baptism Ceremony

Monday, July 12th No Church Activities Scheduled

Tuesday, July 13th

10:00 AM Staff Meeting

Wednesday, July 14th No Church Activities Scheduled

Thursday, July 15th

9:30 AM Holly Berry Fair Craft Prep

Friday, July 16th No Church Activities Scheduled

Saturday, July 17th No Church Activities Scheduled

Sunday, July 18th—Rev. Papagian Leads Worship

10:00 AM Worship Service on Facebook (no in-person)

Monday, July 19th No Church Activities Scheduled

Tuesday, July 20th

10:00 AM Staff Meeting

Wednesday, July 21st No Church Activities Scheduled

Thursday, July 22nd

9:30 AM Holly Berry Fair Craft Prep

10:00 AM Service Recording in Sanctuary

Friday, July 23rd No Church Activities Scheduled

Saturday, July 24th No Church Activities Scheduled

Sunday, July 25th—Rev. Papagian Leads Worship

10:00 AM Worship Service in person & on Facebook

Monday, July 26th No Church Activities Scheduled

Tuesday, July 27th

10:00 AM Staff Meeting

Wednesday, July 28th No Church Activities Scheduled

Thursday, July 29th

10:00 AM Service Recording in Sanctuary

Friday, July 30th No Church Activities Scheduled

Saturday, July 31st No Church Activities Scheduled

AUGUST

Sunday, August 1st—Guest Worship Leader

10:00 AM Worship Service

Monday, August 2nd No Church Activities Scheduled

Tuesday, August 3rd

10:00 AM Staff Meeting

Wednesday, August 4th No Church Activities Scheduled

Thursday, August 5th

9:30 AM Holly Berry Fair Craft Prep

10:00 AM Service Recording in Sanctuary

Friday, August 6th

9:30 AM Movie Club reviews "The Help"

Saturday, August 7th No Church Activities Scheduled

Sunday, August 8th—Rev. Stephen Cushing Leads Worship

10:00 AM Worship Service

Monday, August 9th

6:00 PM Stewardship Committee Meeting

Tuesday, August 10th

10:00 AM Staff Meeting

2:00 PM Connecting the Congregation Team Meeting

Wednesday, August 11th No Church Activities Scheduled

Thursday, August 12th

10:00 AM Service Recording in Sanctuary

Friday, August 13th

9:30 AM Movie Club

Saturday, August 14th No Church Activities Scheduled

Sunday, August 15th—Pip Adams Leads Worship

10:00 AM Worship Service

1:00 PM Open & Affirming Committee Meeting

Monday, August 16th No Church Activities Scheduled

Tuesday, August 17th

10:00 AM Staff Meeting

Wednesday, August 18th

6:00 PM Reopening Task Force Meeting

Thursday, August 19th

9:30 AM Holly Berry Fair Craft Prep

10:00 AM Service Recording in Sanctuary

Friday, August 20th

9:30 AM Movie Club

Saturday, August 21st No Church Activities Scheduled

Sunday, August 22nd—Rev. Papagian Leads Worship

10:00 AM Worship Service in-person & on Facebook

Monday, August 23rd No Church Activities Scheduled

Tuesday, August 24th

10:00 AM Staff Meeting

Wednesday, August 25th

9:00 AM FOOS to Prepare September Church Window

Thursday, August 26th

10:00 AM Service Recording in Sanctuary

Friday, August 27th No Church Activities Scheduled

Saturday, August 28th No Church Activities Scheduled

Sunday, August 29th—Rev. Gordon Rankin Leads Worship

10:00 AM Worship Service

Monday, August 30th

6:30 PM Deacons' Board Meeting

Tuesday, August 31st

10:00 AM Staff Meeting

6:30 PM NHGMC



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*Time Dated Material -
 Please Deliver Immediately!*

Rev. Kevin Pleas
Senior Pastor

**The July & August
 2021
 Church Window**
 Our monthly newsletter
 (603) 625-5093 (with voice mail)
 (603) 622-1511
www.fccmanchesternh.org

Worship will
 continue at 10AM
 on Sundays
 throughout 2021.



PLEASE READ OUR REOPENING INFORMATION
 The Task Force met and reviewed the latest CDC protocols.
 These are our latest guidelines for Worship Services:
 We appreciate those who made advance reservations,
 however they are no longer required.
 Social distancing will be practiced in order to be able to sing.
 If ramp access is needed, please ring the bell.
 Collection box will be located in the narthex and plates by the
 exit doors.
 Hand sanitizer and wipes will be available.
 Ushers will hand out bulletins to those entering the sanctuary.
 People may seat themselves in open pews.
 No child care or Church School. The Cradle Room is available
 but not staffed.
 Masks are appreciated but not required if you are fully
 vaccinated.
 We look forward to seeing everyone, but urge you not to
 congregate inside the building at this time.
 - Thank you, The Reopening Task Force 6/23/21 -

Summer Altar Flowers
 The Altar Design Team would like to extend the
 invitation to anyone who would care to place a
 flower arrangement on the altar this summer.
 The dates the church will be open and that
 flowers are needed for are July 11, (Kevin's last
 Sunday), July 25, August 1, 15 and 29th. Please notify Lauren
 in the church office at 625-5093 or email Terri Pattee:
 seamstressed@yahoo.com or Pam LeBlanc at
 blanclp@comcast.net to chose a Sunday. The arrangement
 can be flowers from your own garden, from the grocery store
 or from a florist. If a florist is used, check with Lauren and she
 can set it up.




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