



THE MEETINGHOUSE

Nelson Congregational Church
830 Nelson Rd.
Nelson, NH 03457

FEBRUARY 2024

Volume 41 Issue 1



Rise to New Life By Jessie Fay

In January many people turn their minds to how they can remake their lives, or how they can add meaning to them. In the Southern Baptist church I grew up in it was also peak season for baptisms, coming off of Christmas- the second busiest time of year for altar calls. There was something about all the twinkle lights that made people want to get themselves saved, and I was no different. I can even remember the sermon that compelled me to the altar: The annunciation. Mary. Her total willingness to submit herself to God's plan to rescue a broken world. That degree of humility and trust was awe-inspiring... Also, my grandmother had been suggesting for quite awhile that she would feel better about the state of my immortal soul if I would go ahead and take the plunge- so that Sunday I made my way to the front of the church during the "invitational hymn" and dedicated my life to Christ. I was almost five.

My great-grandfather had been a well respected minister in our small town, and he and all his descendants tried to help me understand my new commitment. I remember being told that, since I had "accepted Jesus into my heart," He lived there now. I was all good salvation-wise. The only thing left to do, he explained, was to profess my faith publicly to the church through baptism, which I did a few weeks later. The reason for immersion within the Baptist tradition, by the way, is symbolic. As I was immersed, my great-granddaddy said what he said over all he baptized: "Since you have professed your faith in accordance with the Lord's command, I baptize you, (Jessie Lane), in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. *Buried in the likeness of his death, now rise to new life in Him.*" I came up for air expecting some sort of immediate change; that I should somehow feel more "holy." Instead, I felt the same. It was a bit of a let down, but at least no one was worrying about my soul anymore. I also got a cake and some presents out of the experience, so all was well! I had checked off an important box, I believed all the right things, and people were satisfied with me. I wondered if God was.

Ten years later our church partnered with a Spanish speaking congregation; best I know, we rented our chapel to them- but the partnership extended far beyond that. Pastor and Mrs. Esquivel lived out Christ's call to love the poorest among us, and invited our church's youth to join them. Their ministry and our involvement in it caused a bit of a scandal. I can remember many of our parents not being particularly pleased with us (or our youth minister) for joining them in the housing projects, but joined them we did- offering weekly check-ins, providing supplementary meals and clothing to families when necessary, playing and singing with the kids in a "children's service" each Saturday. I can tell you without reservation that this is where I came alive; not at the moment of my baptism, but there in the projects- being shown how to live out the kind of faith my baptism had called me to, within the relationships that were made there.

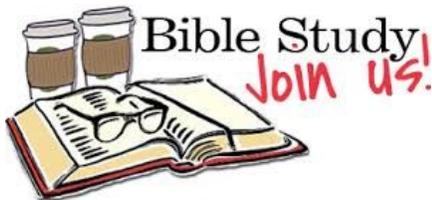
My beliefs about most things have changed over the years. Mostly I've just traded mystery for mystery.... But I do feel that I now have a better understanding of those words my great granddaddy spoke over me when I was five. We can only truly live the life that we were designed for when we die to ourselves and live to serve others. That, to me, is what it means to follow Christ: Checking off boxes and believing the "right" stuff is all well and good, but the state of our souls- the extent to which we experience joy and wholeness on this earth- depends on the degree to which we allow ourselves to be a part of God's plan to make our broken world whole. May we all resolve to rise more fully into new life in 2024: Let us seek to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God as a church family— and find great joy in doing so. Happy New Year!

Jessie Fay



TUESDAY TEA

Weather permitting we are going to meet on February 6 at 10. Hope will host. Coffee and tea will be provided. Please bring a goodie to share. There is usually plenty of refreshments available so don't feel you can't come if you don't bring anything!!! Hope to see you there and bring some brightness to these cold darker days.



BIBLE STUDY

We are currently meeting each Wednesday evening from 7-8pm for our winter Bible Study. Most weeks the study is held over Zoom. The zoom link can be found on our webpage (nelsonchurch.org), or contact the church office to be added to our email list. However, on the last Wednesday of each month, we will hold the Bible study in-person in the church fellowship hall at 5:30pm. For those gatherings we will have coffee and dessert, or if we're feeling ambitious, perhaps even a potluck dinner! Regular attendance isn't necessary so feel free to join the study whenever you are able to!

Passages for the study this evening (we may not get to all of them):
Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
Gen 28:10-22
John 1:43-51



“Souper” Saturday Lunch Free!

Saturday, Feb. 10 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Yes,
there is such a thing as a free
lunch!

The community is invited to stop by for a bowl of soup from a selection of warm homemade soups, bread, and Valentine's cookies. Please join us in the fellowship hall and enter through the side door.

We will be serving several kinds of soup, including vegetarian/vegan, and welcome all for food and conversation.



ASH WEDNESDAY

We are planning an Ash Wednesday service on Wednesday, February 14 at 7 pm. Details are still being worked out so watch your bulletins and updates on our website for more information.

CALENDAR

JAN 31 BIBLE STUDAY
5:30 IN-PERSON

FEB 4 WORSHIP 9:30
COMMUNION

FEB 6 TUESDAY TEA
10 AM @
HOPE'S

FEB 10 SOUPER SAT-
URDAY LUNCH 11 AM-
1 PM

FEB 14 ASH WEDNES-
DAY Service 7pm

FEB 7, 21 BIBLE
STUDY VIA ZOOM 7-8

FEB 25 OPERATIONS
ZOOM 7PM

FEB 28 BIBLE STUDY
5:30 IN-PERSON



CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

The committee met on Monday, Jan. 15, to review how the Advent and Christmas seasons had gone, in terms of worship, holiday decorations in the sanctuary, and other items. About 70 people attended the Christmas Eve candlelight service, which was wonderful. Great singing! Thank you to all who helped.

The committee also finalized plans for "Souper" Saturday lunch, Feb. 10, free and open to all. We will offer homemade soup, bread, cookies, and lots of warm hospitality. A good warm-up for Super Bowl Sunday!

Complete minutes are available in the church office

OPERATIONS GROUP

The last meeting of the group was in November. Discussion surrounded the inspection of the Fire Suppression System and bringing it up to code at a cost of almost \$1,500. This will be followed up on.

Mary French will plow for us through this winter.

It was determined we should get the new railings installed before the ground freezes.

Solar project will be underway.



COMMUNITY CARE

Community Care met on December 18.

Agenda Items:

Christmas Baskets, Christmas Eve Offering, Missions donations, Plans for 2024, Food Pantry Other

Lew will speak with the Selectmen's office in regards to what individuals/families may need a food basket or a Hannaford Card.

The Christmas Eve offering will be used for Fuel Assistance again, Lew will ask Betsy to add a notice on the church website.

There is \$1900 in the budget to divide between Hundred Nights Shelter, Community Kitchen, Monadnock Center for Violence Protection, MAPS, HCS, NH Council of Churches, Indigenous NH Collaborative Coalition, Linda's Closet, Project Home, NH Conference UCC and MFS. Martha & Lew will take care of check requests for Joy.

Food Pantry used frequently. Non-food items have been donated by the Monday Night dancers. Martha & Carol will sort food items for expiration dates.

Beth is stepping down from the committee due to personal commitments.



BELATED BIRTHDAY WISHES:

- JAN 2 SAM CARLISLE
- JAN 4 BRIAN PUTNAM
- JAN 6 LAURIE DERBY
- JAN 10 WENDY KASPER
- JAN 26 LEW DERBY

FEBRUARY

- FEB 1 BRENDA MCEACHERN PHOEBE SNOW
- FE 9 RYAN FRENCH
- FEB 13 JESSIE FAY
- FEB 16 AOLFE BEAUREGARD
- FEB 19 BECKY SNOW
- FEB 22 WILLIAM CARLISLE SADIE FAY
- FEB 27 MICHAEL BLAUDSCHUN
- FEB 28 SUSAN PEERY



HELP WITH HEATING COST AVAILABLE

This year, our Christmas Eve offering was again designated to be used to help local individuals or families that need it with heating costs. If you or your family could use a little assistance with heat this winter (wood, electric, or fuel), please contact the church office at 603-847-3280. There is no "screening" process - we trust you. Also, if you know of anyone who might need help with heating costs, please encourage them to call us. Many thanks to those of you who contributed to this fund, and if you are interested in making a donation please visit nelsonchurch.org or send a check with "fuel assistance" in the memo line to the church at 830 Nelson Road, Nelson, NH 03457.



The Nelson Congregational Church is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2023 Garrett-Larsen Social Justice awards. A total of \$2,250 was awarded in December 2023, split between two local nonprofits.

\$1,250 was given to the Fall Mountain Weekend Food Backpack Program, a community effort that provides free breakfasts, main meals, and snacks on weekends and school vacation weeks to many students in the towns served by the Fall Mountain Regional School District. As the grant application noted, "The teachers, nurses, and staff at Fall Mountain are trained to recognize student hunger when they see it. Hopefully this program ... will reduce the number of students that we see coming to school hungry."

\$1,000 went to Feeding Tiny Tummies, a Keene-based, all-volunteer nonprofit that provides fresh produce, bread, milk, and nonperishables to schools, day cares, and individuals in the Monadnock region. Founded in 2017, the organization has grown to include a resource center for job seekers, seniors, and other groups.

The Social Justice Fund was created in 2019, with broad community support, to honor former pastor Rev. Dawn Garrett-Larsen at the conclusion of her ministry in Nelson. The grants are given with no restrictions.

We thank the many people in our larger community who have contributed to the fund over the years. Your generosity has made this work possible.

Steering Committee, Garrett-Larsen Social Justice Fund
Nelson Congregational Church,
nelsonchurch.org
Betsy Street, Judy Waterston,
Steve Cady, Avery Hurley,
Deanna Zilske, Susan Peery,
Rev. Eliot Fay

GET READY TO HELP ON SUNDAYS

Get Ready to Help on Sundays!! - Heading into this new year, we are asking everyone in the congregation to sign up to help with service support a few times a year. This is a change we are making in response to our organizational structure discussion. More information about this request, what's involved with service support, and how to sign up is forthcoming!



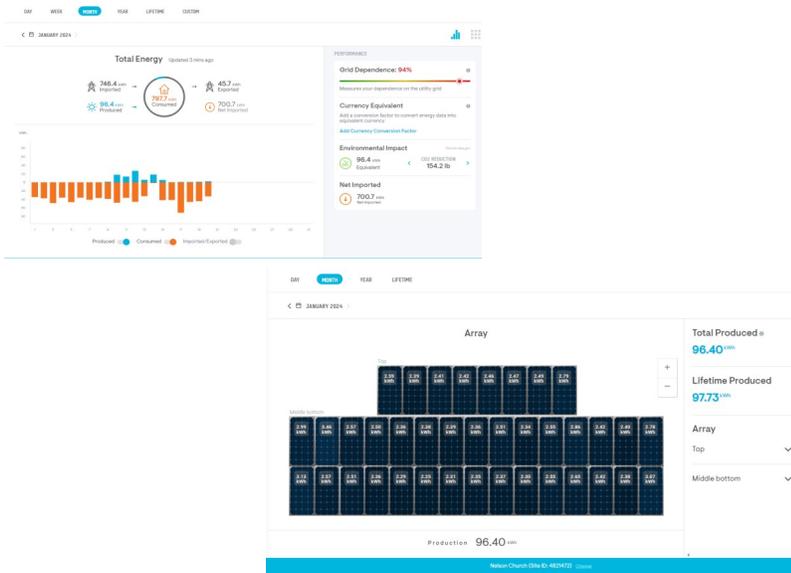
ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

FEBRUARY 14
7 P.M..
NELSON CHURCH



NEW RAILINGS

After much searching and researching for a welder to get some additional railings along the front steps and also along the walkway, with great help of Matt Snow that project has been done and it was completed in time for the Christmas Eve services! It was too cold to paint so that will be done when warm weather returns. Thank you Matt for finding someone to do this for us!!



SOLAR UPDATE

The panels have been installed and you can hardly notice them on the roof of the church. After a delay with working with Eversource we are finally connected and they are just beginning to get going. Off to a slow start because it is winter after all and with the snow and clouds initial data is low and we're at 94% dependent on the grid but have no fear, that will change and improve as time goes by. The charts above are interesting. One is overall usage and the one with all the black is each panel and what each one produces.



We want to remind you that our Prepared to Serve event is fast approaching! Don't miss out on Prepared to Serve 2024, the event that will boost your skills, connect you with others who share your vision, and equip you with tools to enhance your ministry.

Our event registration closes on February 12, so make sure you plan to fill out the registration before then! [Register here](#) | [View our workshop list here](#)

We understand if you are unable to attend, but we want to share a way you can still be involved in this event.

Camper Scholarships Available Through NH Doe Program

Did you know that Horton Center is one of Rekindling Curiosity's eligible summer programs? Financial support is available through this NH program to help get our kids back to camp! Spots are limited, so don't delay! [Learn more at on there website.](#)

Local Church Support Ministry Is Looking for Preaching Mentors

Do you see yourself mentoring a lay person whose goal is to step into the pulpit on occasion? Or perhaps you feel qualified to share preaching resources and experience? With fewer clergy available to fill church openings, gifted lay people want to step up and speak up. Let's provide some underpinnings and support and by so doing we may gift them, and their church, with a richer experience. If you are interested in being a Preaching Mentor, or learning more about it, contact Rev. Dr. Deborah Roof at pastordebora@fpc-ucc.org

PRAYER REQUESTS

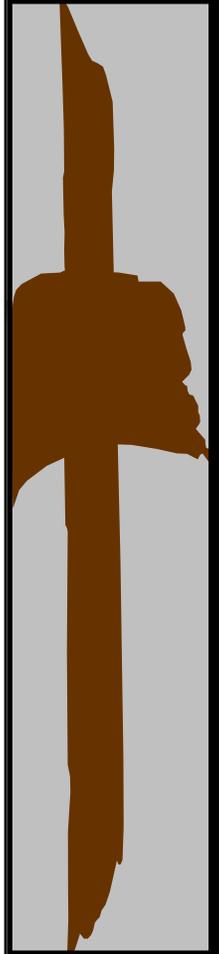
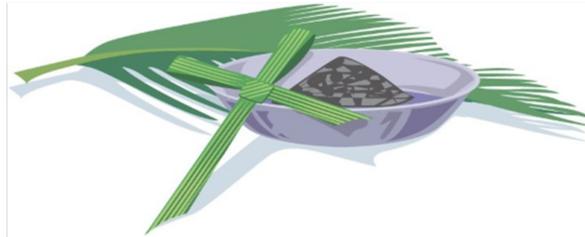
We hold in our prayers: Bob and Sue West's son Steve; Al Chamberlain and Charlotte; Pat Steeves

We also pray for families and friends seeking to heal divisions, those in our community struggling with addiction and mental health, our service men and women, and front-line workers.

(All requests will remain on the prayer list for 2 months. Please email or call the Church Office to be added to, removed from, or remain on the Prayer List.)

Meetinghouse

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Editor: Hope Lothrop
email: ncucnews3@gmail.com
phone: 603-847-9045
Pastor: Rev. Eliot Fay
email: nelsonchurchucc@gmail.com
phone: 603-847-3280 c978-473-2577
Worship: 9:30 AM
Website: <https://www.nelsonchurch.org>
Church Office: nelsonchurchoffice@gmail.com



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