

The Congregate Tidings

Volume 37 Issue 5

May 2023

Meet the Pastor

By Pastor Sue Davidson

It will be my joy to begin a specified ministry with First Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC beginning the first of May and continuing through the end of October. I want to take this opportunity to share with you a bit of my journey of faith. I am a lifelong member of the United Methodist Church (UMC). Being raised in Florida my parents were charter members of two new church starts. The second new church start occurred at the time that I was a teen, at which time I came to know my personal relationship with Christ. I made my first membership vows as a charter member of the Jupiter Florida United Methodist Church.

My family moved to Conway in the summer of 1968 and that is when I met my husband, Tom. Following graduation from Kennett High and licensed practical nursing school, we settled in southern New Hampshire. The following years I participated in all levels of the church as a lay person with leadership in camping ministries, discipleship ministries, and mission outreach ministries. After a move back to the Mt Washington Valley in 2000, I used my medical training at Saco River Medical Center. I began my call to pastoral ministry and was licensed as a Local Pastor in the UMC in 2001 and was appointed as a bi-vocational pastor to the Center Conway UMC. Requirement for the license included a Course of Study which I completed through the Methodist Theological School of Ohio. I continued in that appointment for 20 years with retirement from local church ministry in 2021. I am currently under appointment by Bishop Peggy A. Johnson to extension ministry as the Hospice Chaplain for Visiting Nurse Home Health of Northern Carroll County and Western Maine, a position I have held for the last six years.

I come to First Church to provide leadership in a time of transition with specific responsibilities. I have a passion for worship design and planning, and this will be my primary focus. There are provisions for pastoral care as needed. I will be in the church office on Wednesday's beginning May 3rd. My agreement with First Church includes one Sunday a month away with responsibility for assisting persons preparing for worship on those Sunday's.

I look forward to this opportunity of ministry among you. As a beginning step, I wish to invite you to a time of fellowship and faith-sharing on the second and fourth Wednesdays of May at the church office, the 10th and 24th. I tried and tried to find an appropriate name for our time together, but nothing has yet emerged. It will be a time to have a cup of coffee or tea beginning at 9:30 AM. No agenda other than what we each bring to the day.

May our time together in this mutual ministry be a journey of faith and discovery with a growing relationship not only with each other but with God.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Sue!!

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HAPPY 250th ANNIVERSARY, AMAZING GRACE

By Muriel Magg - Music Team Chair

The 250th anniversary of the beloved hymn “Amazing Grace” is a significant milestone for both music and faith worthy of celebration. The hymn has brought solace, comfort, and peace to countless people over the centuries, and is an exceptional example of the power of music to connect with people’s hearts.

The hymn’s popularity speaks volumes about its message that no matter how deep our sins may be or what circumstances we find ourselves in, God’s grace can still reach us. This simple but profound truth is why it continues to resonate with people two-and-a-half centuries after its initial publication. The story of how “Amazing Grace” came to be is a fascinating and surprising account to share.

One of the most well-known spiritual songs in history, “Amazing Grace” was written by John Newton, (1725-1807) an English slave trader turned minister in 1773. His father was a sea captain and his mother a devout Christian woman who taught her son to know the Bible at an early age. When John was seven, his mother died. He went to sea with his father when he was eleven, and by the time he was seventeen, he was in the British Royal Navy. During his early years as a captain, Newton drifted far from the teachings of his mother and with each passing year sank deeper into the pit of sin.

While caught in a violent storm off the coast of Ireland in 1748, Newton came face to face with the God of his childhood Bible learning, calling out to Him for mercy and praying that the ship and crew would be saved. Right after, a member of the crew replaced Newton on the deck, that man was thrown into the waves and drowned. Newton and the rest of the crew survived the storm and the harrowing journey back to land. John’s life was changed forever.

Despite his newfound faith, Newton continued to work in the slave trade, transporting slaves from Africa to ports where they could be sold for the best prices. Eventually in 1754 he retired due to medical reasons. He abandoned the sea, married Mary Catlett, and felt God’s call to study theology. John became a minister in 1764. While pastor of St. Peter and St. Paul Anglican Church in Olney, John Newton wrote, “I once was lost, but now I’m found, was blind, but now I see,” and the rest of the stirring words that would go on to become “Amazing Grace.”

The powerful lyrics remind us that because of Jesus, none of us are ever lost because God is with us always. It tells how an undeserving wretch is saved from fate that would await him if it weren’t for God’s intercession. It’s also the simple message of forgiveness, redemption, and mercy, that has made “Amazing Grace” one of the most versatile and enduring hymns in the world. Interestingly enough however, the final verse was not written by Newton at all. The verse first appeared in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s immensely influential 1852 anti-slavery novel Uncle Tom’s Cabin, and quickly became assimilated into the hymn.

The original title of the hymn was “Faith’s Review and Expectation” and spoke of Newton’s conversion and of God’s saving power. Since that time the hymn has developed a life of its own. We do not know the tune to which the hymn was first sung, but in 1835, American composer William Walker set it to the tune “New Britain,” the version best known today, found on page #574 in The New Century Hymnal.

As we mark the anniversary of this enduringly popular hymn, take a moment to pause and reflect on the grace extended to all of us through God’s love and how we might extend that grace to those in our communities.

So just like God’s grace, “Amazing Grace” will likely continue to be popular for eternity.



Pastor's Reflections

By Pastor Sue Davidson

My question as we move into the month of May is this, "How do we hold onto the joy of Easter"? Easter doesn't end with just one Sunday, but continues to a new season of grace and at time of joy and thanksgiving. In the life of the church, Easter begins a fifty-day celebration. These fifty days lead us through the month of May to the celebration of Pentecost on the last Sunday of the month.

I love Easter hymns, and this is one that isn't sung often enough: "Easter People Raise Your Voices."

*Easter people, raise your voices, sounds of heaven in earth should ring.
Christ has brought us heaven's choices; Heavenly music, let it ring.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Easter people, let us sing.*

The lyrics remind me that as Easter people our voices are the ones that will carry the love of God wherever we go. As Easter people, we are called to dance our dances of freedom for all the world to see – even, and perhaps especially, in times of great difficulty. Dances of hope. Dances of justice. Dances of love. So during the month of May our worship will use the theme "Dare to Dance".

Now I am not a dancer by any stretch of the imagination. But you don't have to be a dancer to know the freedom of dancing. Each of us has our own "groove." Another way to think of this season is to consider it to be a time of "coming out of the tombs." We each may have a different interpretation of the tombs that bind us. No matter what confines us, the Easter message is one that offers the courage for new starts

During this post-resurrection season, stories point to the joy of living in the beloved community and extending that fellowship through our witness as we dare to dance again!



Deacon's Corner

By Lee Coffield

Greetings from your Deacons. At last spring has arrived. I thought I would never get rid of the 3-foot snow drifts I had in my backyard. Spring clean-up is taking a bit longer this year due to all the leftover winter debris.

We continue without a settled pastor to lead us, but are so grateful to Pastor Sue Davidson for her ministry. We also appreciate the efforts of a dedicated few who are doing whatever needs to be done to keep the church open and running.

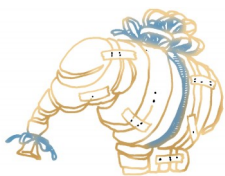
Now that the weather has improved, and COVID is not quite as prevalent as it was, I would encourage you all to return to church on Sunday. Our in-person numbers are increasing a bit. We are still taking precautions, sitting apart and wearing masks if desired. Now is the perfect time to come back to church. I know for many, especially our older folks, it is much easier to just sit and watch the service from home - no weather or traffic to deal with, you don't even need to get dressed if you don't want to! But as grateful as I am to those technically talented few who provide the weekly on-line coverage of the worship service, I **need** to be in church. There is something a bit magical (if that is the correct word) for me to be sitting in the sanctuary; amid the quiet, gazing at the stained glass windows, the cross that symbolizes what religion means to me, the wonderful music, and being able to greet familiar faces. I calm my mind, say prayers for the special people in my life, and then I am truly "in church." So, I would encourage you all to come back to church, we miss seeing you, and we have saved a seat for you.

Special thanks to Karen Umberger and Dan Jones who filled in as our lay leaders for Pastor Sue Davidson while she was away. A big "Thank You" for Carl Lindblade's special music Sunday service. The man is a source of vast knowledge and I so enjoy listening to his messages. Thank you to Floyd, Anne, the choir and the handbell ringers who always provide magical music for us. Reminder – May 28th is Pentecost Sunday. Be sure to wear something **RED**. It is also **Strengthen the Church Sunday**. The second collection of the year is to support Our Church's Wider Mission.

Again, please consider coming back to church. Sending prayers and hugs your way.

Your Diaconate:

Helen Goss, Chairperson; Julie James, Vice-Chairperson and Scribe; Lee Coffield; Laurel Ekberg; Muriel Magg; Fred Starkey; and Gerry Tilton, Deacon Emeritus



Vaughan Community Services will be hosting their **9th Strawberry Festival on June 24th.**

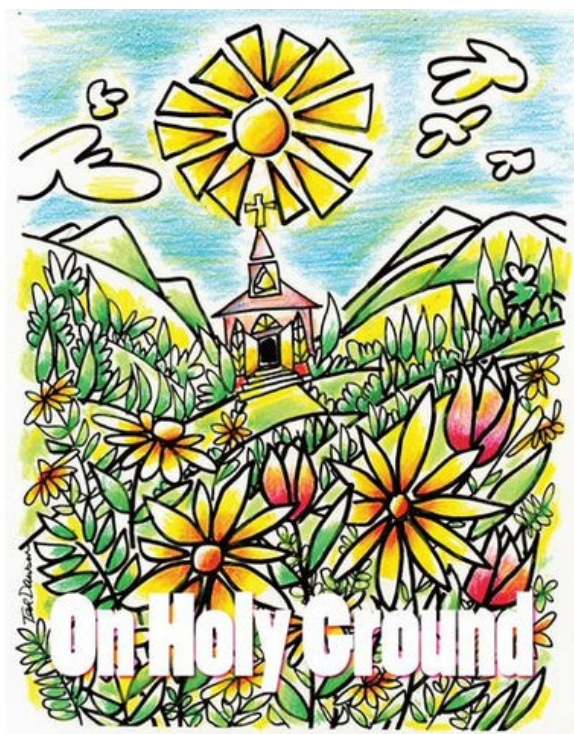


The church will be heading up the White Elephant Table this year. So start saving your good clean treasures that you would like to donate for this benefit.

You can call the church office or Vaughan if you need to drop-off items as we get ready for the Festival.

All proceeds will be split between the church and Vaughan as our mission outreach.

We will need volunteers to help that day. If you are available, please call the church office and let Denise know.



The Strengthen the Church (STC) Offering reflects the shared commitment of people across the United Church of Christ to cooperatively build up the UCC. Conferences and the national setting equally share the gifts given by members and friends through their local congregations. The funds raised support leadership development, new churches, youth ministry, and innovation in existing congregations. **By your generosity to this offering, you build up the Body of Christ.**

As God calls our congregations to be the church in new ways, your generosity will plant new churches, awaken new ideas in existing churches, and develop the spiritual life in our youth and young adults. We will receive the STC offering on Pentecost Sunday, May 28, 2023.



The graphic for the bingo event features the word "BINGO" in large, bold, black letters, each letter contained within a colorful, gradient sphere. Below "BINGO" is the phrase "FOR A CAUSE" in a large, bold, red, sans-serif font with a slight shadow effect.

Join us on Thursday, May 18th

at the Red Parka Pub

to raise money for the

Vaughan Learning Center

\$1 a card with all proceeds to the charity.

Games start at 5:30PM

9th Annual North Conway Strawberry Festival June 24

Vaughan Community Services will, once again, present the **Strawberry Festival** on Saturday, June 24th from 11AM until 4PM on the historic grounds of the First Church of Christ, Congregational. The 9th Annual Festival will feature fresh strawberries in a variety of sweet treats including; smoothies, strawberry shortcake, and hand-dipped chocolate strawberries. The **Strawberry Festival** is one of our largest fundraisers for the work of the **Vaughan Food Pantry (VFP)** and **Vaughan Learning Center (VLC)**. It is a great way to spend the day in North Conway on a beautiful summer afternoon.

All activities will take place, rain or shine, under the tent at the First Church of Christ, Congregational. Besides strawberry treats, the event also provides entertainment with live music, character visits for great family photo opportunities, displays of antique vehicles, a White Elephant sale, children's games, free balloons, craft vendors, and more.

Please contact Denise Leighton in the church office at 603-356-2324 to volunteer to help. It's always a fun event, so come out and be part of this event that benefits our community!





MAY 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30 MUSIC SUNDAY 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship	1 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Blooming Crafts Workshop - Howard Room 6:30pm - 7:30pm Women's AA Step Group	2 12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	3	4 1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 4:00pm - 4:45pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:45pm - 5:45pm Handbell Choir	5 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	6
7 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 11:30am Church Council meeting 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS	8 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Blooming Crafts Workshop - Howard Room 6:30pm - 7:30pm Women's AA Step Group	9 12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	10	11 1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 4:00pm - 4:45pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:45pm - 5:45pm Handbell Choir	12 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	13
14 Mother's Day 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship	15 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Blooming Crafts Workshop - Howard Room 6:30pm - 7:30pm Women's AA Step Group	16 12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 4:00pm Trustees meeting 5:00pm Diacomate meeting	17	18 1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 4:00pm - 4:45pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:45pm - 5:45pm Handbell Choir	19 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	20
21 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS	22 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Blooming Crafts Workshop - Howard Room 6:30pm - 7:30pm Women's AA Step Group	23 12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 2:00pm Music Committee meeting	24	25 1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 4:00pm - 4:45pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:45pm - 5:45pm Handbell Choir	26 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	27
28 Strengthen The Church Offering 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship	29 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Blooming Crafts Workshop - Howard Room 6:30pm - 7:30pm Women's AA Step Group	30 12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	31	1 1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 4:00pm - 4:45pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:45pm - 5:45pm Handbell Choir	2 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	3



We will be celebrating Mother's Day on the second Sunday in May like most of the world.

May 14th is a day to honor your Mother or that person who has been like a "mother" to you.

We are fortunate to have **Steve Woodcock** offer to provide flowers every year to anyone in the church that would like them. You are welcome to take this flower for yourself or to give to a friend or relative to recognize the day.

We thank Steve for his kindness in sharing a little love with all of us to help honor our Mothers on this special Sunday.

LECTIONARY READINGS

May 7, 2023

Communion Sunday

Old Testament Reading: Psalm 22:25-31

New Testament Reading: Acts 8:26-39

May 14, 2023

MOTHER'S DAY

Old Testament Reading: Psalm 90

Gospel Lesson: John 15:9, 11-15a

New Testament Reading: Acts 10:44-48

May 21, 2023

Old Testament Reading: Psalm 47:1-6

Gospel Lesson: Luke 24:44-53

May 28, 2023

PENTECOST SUNDAY

Old Testament Reading: Ezekiel 37:1-12, 14

New Testament Reading: Acts 2:1-21



Thank you!!!

To all of you that have contributed so willingly to bring beauty back to our altar with flowers each Sunday, may you be showered with blessings.

To all of you that have offered to greet, usher, read, welcome, and livestream, may you feel the abounding love from God for services rendered.

To those that have agreed to lead worship when Pastor Sue is away, may you feel the Spirit moving within our community of faith?

Each and every one of you enriches the life at First Church of Christ and it does not go unnoticed.

Hallelujah Is Forever

By Pastor Vince Amlin, Daily Devotional

God's anger is but for a moment; God's favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes in the morning. - Psalm 30:5 (NRSV)

The other day, my wife made her famous apple pie. Only it wasn't. She took the recipe from a different place, thinking it was the usual.

When the pie came out, she knew something wasn't right. The apples had overcooked. The crust wasn't flaky. It tasted like nothing.

The next week she tried again and discovered her mistake. The two recipes were nearly identical. The difference just 1/4 cup of flour and 1/12 cup of shortening. But from our first bites of the second pie, we knew: Yes! That's the way it's supposed to be.

Baking is a delicate balance. So is faith.

Easter, like Lent, is supposed to be a season: 50 days stretching to Pentecost; 7 weeks of celebration, resurrection, and joy. It's called Eastertide. Don't feel bad if you didn't know. No one does.

Many of us observe 40 days of solemn introspection at Lent. We give things up. We take things on. We remember we are dust. We bury our hallelujahs. Then, for one glorious morning, it's lilies, and trumpets, and candy-filled plastic eggs: 40 parts Lent to 1 part Easter. That's the wrong recipe.

The original calls for 50x as much! 50x as many rolled away stones! 50x as many empty tombs! 50x as much death-defeating love! Imagine the difference. In your life. In your church. In our world.

The balance is off. It's time to switch recipes. Welcome to Eastertide. God's anger is for a moment. God's favor for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes in the morning. Death has had its day. Hallelujah, forever!





- 5/1 Marilyn Elliot
- 5/2 Jim Umberger
- 5/2 Pat Grieco
- 5/3 Evelyn Porter
- 5/4 Sarah Eastman
- 5/6 Brian Croce
- 5/9 Doris D'Angelis
- 5/14 Carston Porter
- 5/17 Sara Bechtold
- 5/21 JoAnn Croce
- 5/23 Andy Beeler
- 5/25 Sharon Seaman
- 5/26 Jean Smykla
- 5/29 Mark Porter
- 5/29 Molly Donabedian
- 5/29 Lisa Donabedian

- 5/18 Mark & Sonya Porter
- 5/19 Craig & Carol Fillmann
- 5/21 Gregory & Sandra George



Please pray for those dealing with illness, surgery or recovery, especially: **Peter Magg, Matthew Schiller; Bob Borchers; Bob and Evelyn Porter; Sandy and Greg George; Linda Hyde; Mary Lou Waite, and Audrey Vorperian**

Remember those in our extended care facilities. They are -
At Merriman House:
Liz George-Hussey; Cynthia and Conrad (Connie) Briggs; and Marilyn Elliott

At Mineral Springs:
David Tilton

At Morrison Skilled Nursing or Rehabilitation:
Dr. Charles Taylor
 Send cards to:
 Morrison Skilled Nursing and Assisted Living
 6 Terrace St. - Room 107
 Whitefield, NH 03598

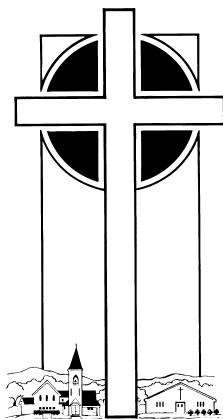
At St. Vincent DePaul:
George Fernald - Glenna Tibbetts' brother

Please call the church office with prayer concerns if you wish names listed in the next *Congregate Tidings*.

The Congregate Tidings
First Church of Christ, Congregational
United Church of Christ
PO Box 401
N Conway, NH 03860-0401



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



TO:



©Heather McCloskey Beck

Fellowship and Faith-sharing
May 10th and 24th at 9:30am
The Pastor's office
All are welcome!
Please come and share.
It's an open agenda!

CHURCH & VAUGHAN STAFF

Pastor: Sue Davidson

Church Administrator/Editor: Denise Leighton

Vaughan Administrator: Jennifer Perkins

Vaughan Learning Center Director:

Heather Ouellette

Organist: Floyd W. Corson

Associate Organist: Muriel Magg

Chancel Choir and Handbell Choir Director:

Anne W. Polak

Church Sexton: Mark Schiller

Worship Service at 10 A.M.
Church Office (603)356-2324
Fax Number (603)356-2106

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