



The Pastor's Piece Run For Your Life By Pastor Walt Hampton, J.D., CFC

She ran!

Early on that first Easter morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and found it empty. The stone had been rolled away, and the body of Jesus was nowhere to be found. In a state of shock and confusion, she did not freeze or retreat into despair; instead, she ran. Mary ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and exclaimed, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him!"

Consider the weight of this moment. Mary Magdalene, a woman who had been transformed by her encounter with Christ, finds herself at the epicenter of a divine mystery. Her response? She runs to share what she has found. This act of running is not merely physical—it's a spiritual sprint towards the fulfillment of a mission. It is the same urgency and purpose that earned Mary the title "Apostle to the Apostles." She was the first to bear witness to the Resurrection, tasked with spreading the news that would alter the course of history.

This story, while ancient, speaks volumes to us today. As Easter people, we are inheritors of Mary's mission. We are called to run out and spread the Good News that Christ is risen and that eternal life awaits for all of us. This call to action is not a leisurely stroll but a passionate sprint fueled by the transformative power of the Gospel.

What does it mean for us, in our time, to run as Mary did? It means that we are to live out our faith with urgency and conviction. It is a call to move beyond the walls of our church and into the world, carrying the message of hope, love, and redemption. It is an invitation to engage with our communities, to listen deeply, and to offer the healing presence of Christ in places marred by division, suffering, and despair.

Running in the way of Mary Magdalene means recognizing the sacred worth of every single person we encounter, regardless of economic means, race, religion, creed, sexual orientation or gender identification. It means recognizing that every single person, without exception, is made in the image and likeness of an all loving God: male and female; black and brown and white; gay and straight; transgender; binary and non-binary. It means advocating for justice, showing mercy, and walking humbly with our God. It calls us to be witnesses to the Resurrection in our words and actions, embodying the love of Christ in all that we do.

This Easter season, let us embrace our identity as Easter people. Let us remember that the tomb is empty not just one day a year, but every day. The stone has been rolled away, inviting us to step out into the world with the assurance of Christ's victory over death. Let us run with the perseverance that the race requires of us, fueled by the knowledge that in Christ, love triumphs over hate, light overcomes darkness, and eternal life is freely offered to all.

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Pastor's piece continued...

As we move into this Easter Season, into the spring in our beautiful Valley, may we carry with us the courage of Mary Magdalene. May we be quick to love, eager to serve, and relentless in spreading the joy of the Resurrection. For in running this race, we affirm the power of the Gospel to transform lives—not just our own, but the lives of all whom we encounter along the way.

So run; and share the Good News.

May the grace and peace of the Risen Christ be with you today and always.

+Walt



Missions 'Crafty Hands' Workshop

Co-Leaders: Mary Lou Waite & Deb Smith

Thank you, members and friends, for your support perusing our display in the Mary Lancaster Room mid-November to late-December.

Including donations from the Christmas Craft Fair on December 2nd, we raised a total of \$523 for the Mission's Community Scholarship Fund for students attending College or a Trade School. Applications will be available come late spring at the Kennett High School and, in an MWV advertisement, open to the community.

There will be a Mission's Scholarship Noisy Offering March-April 2024.

'Crafty Hands' Workshops will continue Mondays 6:30 to 8 p.m. in the Reverence for Life Building's, Howard Room. January to June will focus on Mission Outreach wherever the need arises; whether for fleece hats, Lil Girl dresses, or building Quilt Blocks for small quilts. Knitting and crochet projects are always available, for those who are so inclined, besides those who would rather work at the sewing machines.

Reminder: 'Crafty Hands' Workshop will NOT MEET on Monday Holidays. During the month of April they will not be meeting.

A CELEBRATION OF MUSIC

By Muriel Magg - Music Team Chair

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR CHURCH MUSICIANS WHO BLESS US ALL YEAR LONG IN EVERY SEASON WITH YOUR PRECIOUS GIFTS OF MUSIC.

Music Sunday is a salute in words and music to the creativity, discipline, dedication, and effort of many people young and old, professional and amateur-most of them working without expectation of recognition but who, nonetheless, deserve our awareness and thanks.

Each year the music ministry at First Church of Christ, Congregational continues the exciting mission of spreading the Gospel during each liturgical season from Advent through Pentecost. During the year all, participants in this ministry have the opportunity to grow in their faith, develop their individual talents, and embrace the fellowship and spirit of God as His glory is celebrated through music.

The talents and abilities of our musicians vary greatly-from beginners to more experienced singers, ringers, soloists and instrumentalists. All that is required is to simply have a desire to share your musical gifts and a willingness to make a commitment. We have an amazing group of singers, ringers, and musicians who not only bring joyful sounds to our worship, but also bring a generous spirit with them. Whether you play the pipe organ, piano, handbells, trumpet, guitar, oboe, or use your voice as your instrument, our worship services would be so much less without your particular set of talents and abilities. THANK YOU Floyd, Anne, Chancel Choir, Handbell Ringers, Instrumentalists and Soloists, for consistently providing quality music to enhance our worship experience. We are blessed by your music that speaks to the heart.

Music is a wonderful gift that enables us to combine doctrine and devotion as we praise God. The music offered during our worship services, whether sung by the choir, played on an instrument, or sung by the congregation can have a profound influence on our spiritual lives. Each week Floyd, Anne and Pastor Walt, work to create a unified service. A well-chosen hymn, anthem, or organ selection may illuminate a scripture passage for someone in a way that words alone cannot. Music can serve as a wonderful way to respond to God, expressing praise and thanksgiving for all God has done for us. The music that we hear sung and played is chosen to help us transcend the everyday and touch something eternal.

I pray that you are richly blessed by the music you experience and participate in at First Church of Christ, that it fills your heart, and better prepares you for the days and weeks ahead as you depart to serve.

Please plan on joining us Sunday, April 7th, for a special worship service honoring music and the gift it is in our lives. In music we share a faith that binds us together as one and connects us with faithful people from generations past and with generations yet to come.



WHEN IN OUR MUSIC GOD IS GLORIFIED,
AND ADORATION LEAVES NO ROOM FOR PRIDE,
IT IS AS THOUGH THE WHOLE CREATION CRIED
ALLELUIA!

“The View from my Window”

By Jennifer Perkins, Vaughan Administrator

God willing and the creek don't rise... these words rang true this month, again! On the flipside, we are out of drought status!

The Vaughan Food Pantry has been increasingly busy this March and we are anticipating this trend to continue. Passersby are seeing cars parked in the driveway to the road waiting for our doors to open and some have made donations both monetary and foodstuffs...an effective fundraising technique! The Conway Brown Church is hopeful to find a location to operate from, but until then, our doors are open to meet their needs.

Big shout out to our friends at Our Ladies of the Mountains Parish as they also were moved when witnessing the cars parked out to Route 16 and decided to have a food drive for us. Vaughan Food Pantry collected 527 pounds of food and another \$165.00 in cash and gift cards. All this on short notice and over two days, March 9th and 10th (March Blizzard)!

Early reminder...save the date...Saturday June 29th Strawberry Festival.



Team Pantry emptying the van of a USDA allocation.

Deacon's Corner...

By Helen Goss – Diaconate Chair

Christ is risen! Spring has arrived! And the future is very bright at First Church of Christ! Easter was an extra special day of celebration this year. The sanctuary was filled with so much joy the sparks of the Spirit could be felt moving in our midst. Praise God we have been blessed with so much grace!

Were you there to witness this experience? If not, do you have plans to come back soon? Now is the perfect time to join us back in church! We have so much opportunity ahead of us with limitless growth potential by coming together as a faith community. Every week Pastor Walt invites us to gather and then scatter to share the Light, Love, and Good News that Jesus continues to teach us. It's hard to share any of this when the well runs dry, so come join us to be refreshed and renewed by the Spirit at First Church.

From every pastor that has served at our church, no matter the term, if you took part in the life of the church you had to glean something. From Pastor John Hogue we first learned of Rev. Dr. Michael Piazza who was serving in Brooklyn, NY at the time. He has been a pastor for a good 50 years, is a nationally-known author, and **church growth consultant**. He now serves at Arlington Congregational Church in Jacksonville, FL, where he moved a couple of years ago with his partner to help care for his aging parents. Before Pastor John departed, we had asked Rev. Piazza to come and speak at our church. It was in the planning stages when the move to Florida became necessary. I have continued to subscribe to his daily message, "Liberating Word – Equipping progressive people of faith to be champions of peace & justice." In one of his most recent messages he talks about how as mainline churches of the UCC "our differences are our gift," and that we need to publicly express those differences. He cites some of these gifts as follows: ordaining women, being accepting of all God's children, caring about issues of social justice, and taking care of the environment so we leave a planet on which our children can live. He goes on to say, **"The overwhelming majority of younger people agree with our values. They don't darken our doors, however, because they assume we are just like all the other churches. Until we decide to celebrate our differences, young people will continue to avoid our churches because they assume we are like the rest."** His point being that if we don't share who we are out in the community, how does anyone know?

I am delighted to say that Pastor Walt is working tirelessly to make Rev. Piazza's visit to our Valley a reality! The wheels are already in motion to include our neighboring churches of the Eastern Slope Clergy and the NH Conference. This is only the start of plans on how we can grow our church. Please come and gather with us. We need your voice!



Pastoral Relations Committee

Why have a Pastoral Relations Committee?

This is an excerpt from Guidelines for the Pastoral Relations Committee from the Christian Church of Christ and the Christian Ministry with the addition of tips for active listening.

1. *Building up the Body of Christ*

The *first* reason is to *build up the life of the church and its ministry*. The church is the body of Christ, knit together by God for the mutual up-building of life. This responsibility calls for sensitive care and careful discernment regarding what is beneficial, and is to be exercised in a humble and loving way.

2. *Support*

The PRC is to provide focused, consistent support for the pastor. Ministry is a high stress profession. The high level of personal and congregational expectations contribute to the need for support. Being the primary *care-giver*, the pastor needs a supportive environment for renewal.

All humans need love and the support of other human beings. Personal growth and effectiveness with which a person functions is largely dependent on the quality, if not the quantity, of support they receive. The PRC is a way in which a congregation is intentional about providing support for its pastor and family. The role of a pastor's spouse/partner is unlike that of other professional people. Therefore, the PRC needs to be sensitive to the experiences of the spouse/partner.

3. *Feedback and Communication*

The PRC can provide a regular channel of communication for cultivating an open, affirmative and creative relationship between the pastor and congregation, enabling the church to fulfill its mission effectively. Communication is a vital ingredient in the provision of support.

- Listening is a presence and affirmation of another
- Listen with the “*third ear*”, pay close attention to feelings and body language
- Take time for discernment, ask follow-up questions to fully understand what is being shared
- Check your perceptions by repeating to the speaker what was heard
- Forming a response while listening is not truly listening. It's okay to sit, take time to reflect on the speaker's words before speaking
- A verbal response is not always necessary or even being asked of you

The Pastoral Relations Committee:

Sonya Porter - Chair, Laurel Ekberg - Co-chair, Steve Woodcock, and Jim Umberger



Pastoral Relations

Church World Service Thank You Letter For Prepared to Serve Period Packs



Hello everyone,

On behalf of Church World Service and the communities we serve, we want to thank the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ for supporting our Period Pack program at this year's Prepared to Serve!










Thanks to your support, 700 Period Packs were assembled in less than 5 hours! These Kits will support those facing Period Poverty both here in New Hampshire and throughout the United States.

We know this project would never have happened without the support of the Conference staff, especially Cindy Bradley and Thaddeus Sieverding, the financial support of congregations throughout the area, and everyone who visited us and helped prepare and assemble the Period Packs. Thank you so much for your love and support for our vulnerable neighbors!

Sincerely,
Adam Smedberg
Belinda Addae
Shannon Dombrowski
David Costellow



APRIL 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31 6:30am Easter Sunrise Service 10:00am Easter Worship Service 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship  EASTER SUNDAY	1 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	2 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	3 9:30am - 10:30am Faith Fellowship 	4 9:30am - 2:30pm WIC Program 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	5 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	6
7 9:30am - 11:00am Music Sunday Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 11:30am Mission Team meeting 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS 	8 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	9 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	10 9:00am - 11:00am Essential Non-Food Pantry	11 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	12 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	13
14 Pastor Sue Davidson, Preaching 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 	15 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	16 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 4:00pm Trustees meeting 5:00pm Diacomate meeting 	17 9:30am - 10:30am Faith Fellowship 	18 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	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  Guest Preacher	22 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	23 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 	24	25 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	26 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	27 5:00pm Mission Pot Luck 
28 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship	29 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	30 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	1 9:30am - 10:30am Faith Fellowship	2 9:30am - 2:30pm WIC Program 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	3 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	4

LECTIONARY READINGS

APRIL 7, 2024

Music Sunday

Second Sunday of Easter

Old Testament Reading: Acts 4:32-35

Psalter Psalm 133

New Gospel Reading: 1 John 1:1-2:2

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

APRIL 14, 2024

Third Sunday of Easter

Old Testament Reading: Acts 3:12-19

Psalter Reading: Psalm 4

New Testament Reading: 1 John 3:1-7

Gospel Lesson: Luke 24:36b-48

APRIL 21, 2024

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Old Testament Reading: Acts 4:5-12

Psalter Reading: Psalm 23

New Testament Reading: 1 John 3:16-24

Gospel Lesson: John 10:11-18

APRIL 28 2024

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Old Testament Reading: Acts 8:26-40

Psalter Reading: Psalm 22:25-31

New Testament Reading: 1 John 4:7-21

Gospel Lesson: John 15:1-8

May 5, 2024

Hymn Sing Sunday

Old Testament Reading: Acts 10:44-48

Reading: Psalm 98

New Testament Reading: 1 John 5:1-6

Gospel Lesson: John 15:9-17

Vaughan Community Service will be having their 10th Strawberry Festival on June 29th.

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. If you are available, please call the church office and let Denise know.



If you are able and willing to be a Greeter, Liturgist, Usher on any Sunday, please call the church office or sign-up in the Fellowship Hall of the Church.

Also, any meeting dates, concerns or needs, call the church office.

Behind The Scenes With Pastor Walt The Mess Behind The Message



The pastor would love it if the weekly message was beamed down on stone tablets from high on Mount Washington. But the truth is that it looks more like this!

Vaughan Learning Center

By Heather Ouellette, Director

Spring is in the air, which means MUD! Kids love mud. They are absolutely, positively wild about mud.

We have some new equipment and supplies thanks to Goldberg Foundation and Chalmers Insurance Group so a huge THANK YOU to them.

We have some fundraisers coming up. In May we will have a calendar raffle \$10 per ticket with many great prizes. June is our Strawberry Festival and in July we have a fundraiser at Flatbread. We are looking for raffle items for all these events; gift cards, locally made items, and any other items we can raffle. To donate an item or to purchase a ticket, reach out to Heather at the Learning Center or call 603-356-5213.

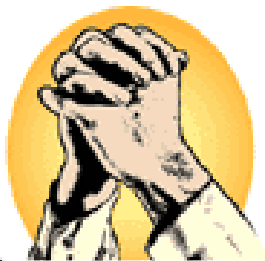




04-03 Jessica Hodgkins
04-09 Daniel Nusbaum
04-11 Linda Hyde
04-12 Dyane Barbour
04-12 Patsy Perry
04-15 Laurel Ekberg
04-15 Claire Smith
04-16 Christine Russian
04-18 Barbara Starkey
04-20 Dorthea Seybold
04-25 Patricia McGrath
04-27 Fred Starkey
04-30 Brady Boucher



04-10 Fred and Barbara Starkey
04-21 Peter and Linda Hyde



Prayer Requests

Please pray for those dealing with illness, surgery or recovery, especially:
Lee Coffield, Barabara and Fred Starkey; Bob Borchers; Evelyn Porter; Sandy George; Linda Hyde; Patti Bean; Jesse and Linda Red Horse; Audrey Vorperian; Laura Jean Beeler; Nancy Lawson-Jacobs; and Angie Terry, Jennifer Terry's sister-in-law.

Remember those who mourn, especially the families of **Robert Malcolm, Sonya Porter's Father.**

Remember those in our extended care facilities.

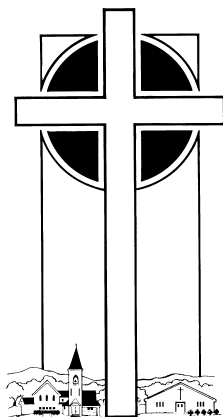
At Merriman House: Liz George-Hussey; Cynthia and Conrad (Connie) Briggs and Marilyn Elliott

Please call the church office with prayer concerns if you wish names to be 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:



Invite a Neighbor to Church

CHURCH & VAUGHAN STAFF

Pastor: Walt Hampton
Church Administrator/Editor: Denise Leighton
Organist: Floyd W. Corson
Associate Organist: Muriel Magg
Chancel Choir and Handbell Choir Director:
Anne W. Polak
Vaughan Administrator: Jennifer Perkins
Vaughan Learning Center Director:
Heather Ouellette
Church Sexton: Mark Schiller

Worship Service at 10am
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Fax Number (603)356-2106
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