



Volume 39 Issue 4

April 2025

The Pastor's Piece

Walking the Resurrection Talk

By Pastor Walt Hampton, J.D., CFC

Easter is coming.

We say we are an Easter people.

It's the high holy day in Christianity. The centerpiece of our faith. The defining moment.

We say we believe in the Resurrection.

And yet, it is a fairly unbelievable story.

A dead man rising?

It stretches the limits of what we understand.

So, for many, the Resurrection stays in the background. A nice story. Abstract. Cerebral. Maybe historical. Maybe not. But distant.

Yet, if we are followers of Jesus, we are called to follow him all the way.

Life. Death. And resurrection.

Resurrection is not just something that happened to Jesus. It is something that happens. Over and over.

It is happening now.

This is the heart of Franciscan theology. God is always breaking into the world. The Incarnation is ongoing. The Christ mystery unfolds in every moment. Birth, death, resurrection—again and again.

This is not metaphor. This is reality.

Resurrection is not locked in the past. It is not a doctrine to believe. It is a way of life.

We see it in nature. The seed falls to the ground, buried in darkness, and rises in new life. The caterpillar dissolves, disintegrates, and emerges with wings. The forest burns, only to regenerate with greater richness than before.

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Death is never the end of the story.

We see it in history. The Berlin Wall falls. Apartheid ends. The enslaved are set free.

What was once declared dead rises again.

We see it in our own lives. The loss that seemed unbearable, and yet we kept breathing. The failure that crushed us, and yet we learned and grew. The grief that swallowed us, and yet love found us again.

We have all known resurrection.

Mary Magdalene experienced it that first Easter.

She stood outside the tomb, weeping. Everything she had hoped for was gone. Jesus was dead. The story was over.

And then—he called her name.

Mary.

And suddenly, the world cracked open.

She mistook him for the gardener. Maybe she wasn't wrong.

Maybe Jesus, the Christ, is the one who tends the garden of new life. Who brings forth what was dead. Who calls us out of the tomb and into the light.

The Gospel writers don't tell us how the resurrection happened. They simply tell us that it did.

And that it changes everything.

If we are an Easter people, we cannot simply admire resurrection from a distance. We must walk the resurrection talk.

That means choosing life. Again and again.

It means looking for where God is breaking in. Where the Spirit is calling forth newness. Where love is rising from the ashes.

It means being resurrection people in a world obsessed with death. A world that worships power, clings to fear, hoards wealth, and believes in scarcity.

Resurrection people do the opposite.

We choose love over fear.

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We choose generosity over hoarding.

We choose justice over indifference.

We choose to believe that what looks like the end may, in fact, be the beginning.

This is not easy. Resurrection is not painless. It comes after loss, after grief, after death. It requires letting go of what was so that something new can emerge.
But this is the way of Jesus.

This is the way of life.

So here is the challenge. How will you practice resurrection?

Will you welcome the stranger? Feed the hungry? Care for the marginalized? Call out injustice?

Will you serve where there is need?

Will you refuse to believe the lie that things will never change?

Will you love without condition, without restraint, without exception?

Will you tell your story so others can find hope?

The tomb is empty.

Christ is risen.

And resurrection is ours to live.

May it be so.

Peace to you,

+Walt



The Glue That Holds It All Together

By Pastor Walt

Elon Musk recently claimed that the fundamental weakness of Western civilization is empathy.

He made the pronouncement without hesitation. As if empathy were a liability. As if it made us fragile. As if the world would be better off without it.

He's not alone. There is a growing chorus of voices telling us that compassion is a flaw. That care is expendable. That looking out for one another makes us weak.

Woke even.

But that is a lie.

From the very beginning of our time here on earth, we've needed each other.

Humans are not solitary creatures. We are wired for connection. We survive in communities, not in isolation.

Science backs this up. Neuroscientists have mapped the brain's empathy circuits. Mirror neurons fire when we see another person in pain. Our nervous systems are designed to respond to the suffering of others.

Empathy is not weakness. It's biology. It's survival.

Quantum physics supports this too. The universe itself is relational. At the most fundamental level, particles are entangled. What happens to one influences another, even across vast distances.

We are, quite literally, interconnected. What affects one of us affects all of us. The boundaries we believe separate us are illusions.

And yet, some want us to believe that empathy is dangerous. That caring about others will hold us back. That our survival depends on domination rather than cooperation.

We see it in policy.

Aid programs slashed. Families torn apart. Immigrants imprisoned without cause. Safety nets dismantled. Protections stripped away from those who need them most.

We see it in governance.

Whiplash policies keeping people in a constant state of fear. Leaders who thrive on chaos. A culture of cruelty that punishes the vulnerable and rewards the powerful.

We see it in rhetoric.

The richest man in the world calling the poor parasites. Political leaders mocking the weak. Public figures sneering at kindness, treating it like a relic of a bygone era. The message is clear: Empathy is a liability.

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And yet, the truth is just the opposite.

Brené Brown calls empathy the bridge to human connection. It is what allows us to step into another person's experience. To feel what they feel. To see the world through their eyes.

Empathy is not about fixing. It is about presence. It is about standing with people in their suffering. It is about recognizing our shared humanity.

The early Jesus movement understood this. The call was not to amass wealth or dominate the weak. The call was to love. To serve. To care for the least among us.

So we have a choice.

We can believe the lie that empathy makes us weak. We can harden our hearts. We can let cruelty reign. We can build a world where only the ruthless survive.

Or we can resist.

We can choose to care. We can choose to see. We can choose to love.

Empathy is not our weakness. It is our greatest strength.

This is not complicated. This is not theoretical. This is the most practical thing in the world.

Love one another.

Not just in sentiment. Not just in theory. But in action.

Love one another in the policies we fight for. In the leaders we choose. In the way we spend our time, our money, our attention.

Love one another when it's inconvenient. When it costs something. When the world tells us not to.

Love one another on social media whether you agree with their position or not.

And then be in action.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act."

So act.

Not just with words, but with deeds. With courage. With presence. With a willingness to stand in the gap for others.

Because the world needs more empathy, not less. The world needs more love, not more indifference. The world needs people willing to stand up, speak out, and do the hard work of loving one another.

The world needs you.

Deacon's Corner...

By Helen Goss – Diaconate Chair

Spring is here and Easter is upon us! Are we ready to be Easter People? What are you yearning for this Easter season? What voices are you listening to in this changing world around us? How can you be the voice of hope sharing the good news of Christ's sacrifice for *ALL* God's people?

Your Diaconate in unification with Pastor Walt is offering a full month of events leading up to Easter for you to experience. These may provide some answers to thoughts you are struggling with and help to reignite your faith. Take a step out of your comfort zone to gather in community with others. You might just find yourself welcoming a stranger and realizing how faith provides that Divine connection.

We all need to do a better job of inviting others to join us. First Church of Christ has received so many blessings that we should be excited to share: a dynamic pastor; an extremely talented pianist/organist; an enthusiastic choral/handbell director; a children's faith lesson prepared weekly; and we are an open and affirming congregation welcoming all to the table. We are standing on firm financial ground, thanks to careful concerned oversight which enables us to carry on the missions of this church. Our future needs to hold many more fruitful discussions on this topic of getting the word out beyond our four walls if we expect to thrive.

"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." ~ Rev. Dr. Michael Piazza

Are we ready to celebrate our differences? I think it's way past time. I, for one, am excited to be part of how we will embody the gift of resurrection and live differently for the sake of Christ.

We hope to see you come back for Easter, but more so, keep coming to be part of this faith community. There is no shortage of work to be done and your voice matters. Come with an open heart, open mind, and fresh ideas to share. We want to see you and hear from you directly, not third-hand. Come and be part of our Easter celebration and may the Spirit of the living God fall afresh on you!



CHRIST THE LORD IS RISEN TODAY ALLELUIA!

By Muriel Magg - Music Team Chair

As with many of the most popular hymns, “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today” has survived the centuries thanks to a successful marriage of lyrics and music. It’s tune first circulated in 1708, but no composer has ever been acknowledged. Charles Wesley’s original text written in 1739, did not include the song’s most distinctive characteristic - the “Alleluia!” - which we sing at the end of each line and remains so popular today. It seems the lyrics didn’t quite fit the tune, so an unknown editor added the “Alleluia!” refrain later. This melodic and exuberant hymn truly conveys the triumphant joy that is ours on Easter morning. There is a good probability that we, like other Christians around the world, will sing “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today” this Easter, remembering that Christ died for us, and His power enables us to overcome suffering and death just like He did.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788) was a leader of the Methodist movement and the great hymn-writer of the Wesley family, perhaps taking quantity and quality into consideration, the great hymn-writer of all ages. Charles was the youngest son and 8th child of Samuel and Susanna Wesley, born at Epworth, England. He was educated at Westminster School where he was elected King’s Scholar and received his board and education free. Afterward, Charles attended Christ Church, Oxford, where he received his degree in 1735 and immediately proceeded with his brother, John, to Georgia in America where both were employed as missionaries. The brothers returned to England a year later and for many years they continued focusing on studying the Bible, preaching the Gospel, and living a holy life.

“CHRIST THE LORD IS RISEN TODAY” is one of the best known of all the Easter hymns, portraying not only the resurrection, but also the crucifixion. A striking feature of the hymn is that its text is written in the present tense. “Christ the Lord is risen today” - - not “has risen” or “rose.” The hymn begins with both heaven and earth singing in praise of Christ having won the battle and defeated death. The praise continues in the second stanza where Wesley first refers to Christ as “LOVE” and “REDEEMER.” He quotes Paul’s letter to the Corinthians (15:55) where Paul is mocking death: “Where O Death is now thy sting? Where’s thy victory boasting grave?” The final stanza declares that if we are indeed made like Christ and we follow his example, then we can know everlasting life. This is our ultimate hope—present, past, and future.

Long before I ever understood Christ’s atoning sacrifice or appreciated his glorious resurrection, I formed strong associations with Easter. Sure, the candy and family gatherings created joyous memories, but it was the music - the same songs every year that were played and sung in my church that blossomed with new meaning after my teenage years.

Our hymns are fundamentally poetry, a lyrical blending of devotion and doctrine. When these words are set to an appropriate and singable tune they have the ability to stick in the memory, refreshing the soul again and again.

“Christ the Lord Is Risen Today” has been enthusiastically sung in Easter services for over 280 years. May this hymn continue to be a blessing to you as we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord this Easter.

“CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED! ALLELUIA!”





APRIL 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30 One Great Hour of Sharing Offering 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship	31 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Scouts of America Troop 150 and Pack 150 	1 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 5:30pm - 7:00pm Revolving Closet Board meeting	2	3 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	4 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	5
6 10:00am Communion Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS	7 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Scouts of America Troop 150 and Pack 150	8 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	9 9:00am - 11:00am Senior Non-Food Pantry	10 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	11 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	12
13 10:00am Communion Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 	14 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Scouts of America Troop 150 and Pack 150	15 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 4:00pm Trustees meeting	16 5:00pm Sedar Celebration at Gibson Center 	17 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:00pm Maundy Thursday Service 	18 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:00pm Good Friday Worship Service 	19
20 6:30am Easter Sunrise Service 10:00am Easter Communion Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS 	21 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Scouts of America Troop 150 and Pack 150	22 9:30am - 10:30am Faith Fellowship 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 12:30pm - 2:00pm Clergy of the Eastern Slope Luncheon 5:00pm Diaconate meeting	23	24 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	25 Denise out of office for Surgery 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	26 2:00pm Floyd Corson Celebration of Life Service
27 10:00am Lay Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship	28 Denise out of office for Surgery 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Scouts of America Troop 150 and Pack 150	29 Denise out of office for Surgery 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	30 Denise out of office for Surgery	1 Denise out of office for Surgery 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	2 Denise out of office for Surgery 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	3

HOLY WEEK



WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Palm Sunday Service, April 13th at 10am

MWV Community Passover Seder & Liturgy
Wednesday, April 16th 5:00-7:30pm at the Gibson Center

Maundy Thursday Service, April 17th at 7pm

Good Friday, April 18th Prayer and Meditation 9am-4pm
Sanctuary Open

Good Friday Interfaith Service, April 18th at 6pm

Easter Sunrise Service, April 20th 6:30am in the Church Park
with a Continental Breakfast to follow

Easter Sunday Service, April 20th at 10am
Children's Easter Egg Hunt



Easter Lilies!!!

If you would like to purchase one in memory or in honor of someone, please provide the following information along with payment of \$10.00 (checks payable to: First Church) and the lily is yours! These can be taken home after the Easter Service on April 20th for your enjoyment or for delivery to a loved one.

Given by: _____

In Memory or Honor of (circle one): _____

(If given in "Memory of" the person has passed. If given in "Honor of" the person is living.)

Your request and payment can be placed in the Collection Plate on Sunday, dropped off at the Church Office, or mailed to the church at PO Box 401, North Conway, NH 03860.

DEADLINE TO ORDER IS WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16TH.




Experience the Richness of Passover!

**Mt Washington Valley
COMMUNITY
SEDER**


- **RSVP by Fri, APRIL 11:**
LINK: <https://summitsuccess.typeform.com/to/DcxPXvVI>
- **POTLUCK by LAST NAME:**
A-H: Soup & Entree, I-P: Salad or Side Dish, Q-Z: Dessert.
- **SUGGESTED ITEMS for SEDER:**
 - ✦ *Matzah ball soup and traditional seder dishes*
 - ✦ *Potatoes and vegetables: carrots, string beans, broccoli, asparagus, cauliflower, squash*
 - ✦ *Green mixed salads*
 - ✦ *Main entree suggestions: brisket, chicken, fish*
- **RESTRICTED FOOD ITEMS that should not be used:**
ham/pork, bacon or shellfish, no products made with leaven (yeast) such as bread, pasta, or pastries.
- **BRING BOTTLE of RED WINE to share at your table.**
If you want non-alcoholic beverages, except water, please BYOB.

Wed, APRIL 16 • 5-7:30pm
@ Gibson Center
North Conway, NH

Join us for a special **MWV Community Passover Seder & Liturgy** hosted by the Clergy of the Eastern Slopes, including the Mt Washington Valley Chavurrah. This interfaith gathering is a beautiful opportunity to connect with our shared spiritual heritage, embracing the deep, sacred traditions of Passover that resonate with our own faith journey.

 **Wednesday, April 16**
 **5:00 - 7:30 PM**
 **Gibson Center**

RSVP by Friday, April 11: <https://summitsuccess.typeform.com/to/DcxPXvVI>

 **Potluck by Last Name:**
A-H: Soup or Entree
I-P: Salad or Side Dish
Q-Z: Dessert

Please Note:

To honor the traditions of Passover, please avoid using ham/pork, bacon, shellfish, or any leavened products (like bread, pasta, or pastries).

Bring a bottle of red wine to share at your table. If you prefer non-alcoholic beverages (other than water), please bring your own.

Suggested Dishes for the Seder:

Matzah ball soup and traditional seder dishes
Potatoes and vegetables: carrots, string beans, broccoli, asparagus, cauliflower, squash
Green mixed salads
Main entrees: brisket, chicken, fish

Come, share in the storytelling, the symbolism, the delicious food, and the powerful sense of community that this sacred meal offers. Let's come together in the spirit of love, learning, and unity.

We hope you will join us for this meaningful experience!



04-03 Jessica Hodgkins
 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 Dortha Seybold



04-10 Fred and Barbara Starkey
 04-16 Peter and Linda Hyde



Floyd W. Corson's Celebration
 of Life Service will be on
 April 26th at 2pm.

LECTIONARY READINGS

April 6, 2025

Fifth Sunday in Lent

Isaiah 43:16-21
 Psalm 126
 Philippians 3:4b-14
 John 12:1-8

April 13, 2025

Passion or Palm Sunday

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29
 Luke 19:28-40 Passion
 Isaiah 50:4-9a
 Psalm 31:9-16
 Philippians 2:5-11
 Luke 22:14—23:56 or Luke 23:1-49

April 20, 2025

Easter

Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 65:17-25
 Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
 1 Corinthians 15:19-26 or Acts 10:34-43
 John 20:1-18 or Luke 24:1-12

April 27, 2025

Second Sunday of Easter

Acts 5:27-32
 Psalm 118:14-29 or Psalm 150
 Revelation 1:4-8
 John 20:19-31



Please pray for those dealing with illness, surgery or recovery, especially:
Evelyn Porter; Linda Hyde; Jesse & Linda Red Horse; and Angie Terry,
Jennifer Terry's sister-in-law.

Remember those who mourn especially the families of **Marilyn Elliott and Tony Michalik.**

Remember those in our extended care facilities.

At Merriman House: **Liz George-Hussey and Cynthia Briggs.**

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:

Crafty Hands Workshop

Reverence for Life Bldg – Howard Room
Come whenever you can -
Mondays 6:30 to 8pm
(No Monday Holidays)

January to May Mission Outreach

Bring an idea.
Share a pattern.
Come for the camaraderie!

Current Projects:

Service Quilt
Knitted Infant Animal Slippers,

Special request:
Knit or Crochet Dish Cloths

Mary Lou Waite, Co-Lead
508-272-0734 (Call/Text)

CHURCH & VAUGHAN STAFF

Pastor: Rev. Walt Hampton, J.D., CFC
Church Administrator/Editor: Denise Leighton
Pianist/Organist: Patrick Speckamp
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

Church Office (603)356-2324
Pastor Ext. #2, Denise Ext. #1
Fax Number (603)356-2106
Vaughan Food Pantry (603)602-1801
Vaughan Learning Center (603)356-5213
E-mail addresses:
pastor@firstchurchnc.com
churchoffice@firstchurchnc.com
Church Website: www.firstchurchnc.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/firstchurchncnh