

# The Congregate Tidings

Volume 40 Issue 4

April 2026

## A Lenten Prayer for a World in Conflict

Written by Rev. Darrell Goodwin,

Executive Conference Minister and President of the Southern New England Conference

God of mercy and justice, we come before You in this Lenten season  
marked by ashes, by repentance, by truth-telling.

We confess that we are a world at war,  
nations rage, and communities are fracturing.

Neighbors turn on neighbors, and the cries of the innocent rise to heaven.  
Forgive us, O God.

Forgive our silence when violence speaks too loudly.  
Forgive our comfort with injustice, our distance from suffering,  
our failure to see Your image in every human life.

In this season of return, turn us again toward You.

Where there is hatred, sow in us love.

Where there is fear, plant courage.

Where there is despair, kindle hope that refuses to die.

We pray for those living under the shadow of war  
for children who cannot sleep, for parents who cannot protect,  
for leaders who must choose the path of peace over power.

Be near, O God.

Be near to the brokenhearted.

Be near to the displaced and the grieving.

Be near to those whose names we do not know,  
but whose pain You hold.

And stir in us a holy disruption,  
that we would not grow numb to suffering,  
but instead become instruments of Your peace.

Let our prayers move our feet.

Let our repentance reshape our lives.

Let our fasting make room for generosity and justice.

As we journey toward the cross,  
remind us that You know suffering intimately, that in Christ,

You entered the violence of this world  
and answered it not with vengeance, but with love.

So teach us, O God, to lay down what divides,  
to take up what heals, and to follow the way of Jesus.

Until swords are beaten into plowshares,  
and every tear is wiped away, we will pray, we will hope, we will act.

In the name of Jesus and Justice, our peace and our redeemer.

Amen.



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## Deacon's Corner...

By Helen Goss – Diaconate Chair

We just spent a wonderful weekend, (March 14-15), with Rev. Paul Nickerson of Nickerson Coaching seeking his counsel as we work to reunite at First Church and put some months of strong negativity behind us. I want to thank the twenty-three people that were willing to share part of their Saturday and Sunday fellowship with Rev. Nickerson. By all accounts, I believe he was well received and his guidance going forward will be welcomed. We await his written report in the Church Office that will then be available for all to read. At the Diaconate's March meeting we will be discussing folks that we feel can best serve on the team Rev. Nickerson wants to continue coaching through as we lean into our Church Covenant.

**Holy Week** has begun as **March 29<sup>th</sup>** was **Palm Sunday**, which I hope many of you could join us for. **Pastor Sue** has planned a beautiful **Maundy Thursday Service** with the Choir for **April 2<sup>nd</sup> at 7PM**, incorporating our *Holy Vessels* theme. On **Good Friday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>**, the church will be open from 9AM to 3PM as a sacred space for reflection. Then we will meet for an **Easter Sunrise Service, April 5<sup>th</sup>** across the street in the **Church Park at 6:30AM** with a Continental Breakfast to follow in the Fellowship Hall. (If the park is not suitable for service, we will gather in the church parking lot.) The week will culminate with a glorious **Easter Worship Service at 10AM** in our sanctuary with music beyond compare!

Pastor Sue will be departing for a spell after Easter. Please know that your Diaconate and the Pastoral Search Committee have not been sitting idle knowing that Pastor Sue's time with us would, unfortunately, come to an end. Additionally, **I will be out for a month as of April 13<sup>th</sup> for knee replacement surgery**. So here is the plan going forward:

**April 12<sup>th</sup> – Faith Leader, Helen Goss**  
**April 19<sup>th</sup> – Faith Leader, Karen Umberger**  
**April 26<sup>th</sup> – Faith Leader, Chris DeVries**  
**May 3<sup>rd</sup> – Pastor Sue Davidson (Communion Sunday)**  
**May 10<sup>th</sup> – Faith Leader, Helen Goss (The good Lord willing!)**  
**May 17<sup>th</sup> - Faith Leader, Eryn Morency**

We hope you plan to be with us for Easter and keep coming back in the weeks to follow. Come and be the Easter people we were meant to be, and may the Spirit of the living God fall lovingly on you!



## IN THE BULB THERE IS A FLOWER

“A Hymn of Promise”

By Muriel Magg - Music Team Chair

(A Hymn of Promise, verse 1)

“In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree; in cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free! In the cold and snow of winter there’s a spring that waits to be, unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.”

The words from the Easter Hymn #433 “In the Bulb There is a Flower” by Natalie Sleeth in The New Century Hymnal seem so appropriate this year as we emerge from one of the snowiest and coldest winters we, in the northeast, have seen in a while. It is one of the most beautiful hymns written in the 20th century with scriptural references taken from Genesis 1:14, 1 Corinthians 15:51, John 12:24, Psalms 1:3, 30:5 and Ecclesiastes 3:1-8.

The “Hymn of Promise” composed in 1985, is not only a reflection of what God does as the seasons change, but what God’s grace does in our lives as we are brought to life through the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus. Natalie Sleeth reflects on how God gives us new life in the beautiful line, “There’s a song in every silence, seeking word and melody; there’s a dawn in every darkness, bringing hope to you and me.” No moment is so dark that the light of God cannot pierce. No situation is so bleak that God’s love is not greater still. Even in death, our faith proclaims a victory.

Natalie Sleeth, a prolific composer of choral music, wrote some words after thinking about the death of a friend. She described that she was “pondering the ideas of life, death, spring, and winter, Good Friday and Easter, and the whole world reawakening that happens every spring.” Natalie was inspired by a T. S. Eliot poem which contains the phrase, “In the end is our beginning,” the phrase that begins the third stanza of the hymn. Many times wonderful things spring up in the most unlikely places, and you know that these things could only be imagined and inspired by a loving, creative, wonderful God.

Natalie had the ability to compose both texts and music. She had a gift for composing texts on complex theological ideas that were still accessible to children. Her melodies seemed totally natural and effortless to learn.

Natalie Sleeth (1930-1992) was born in Evanston, Illinois. She began studying piano at the age of four and gained most of her musical experience by singing in choral ensembles during her earlier years. She received her B.A. in music theory, piano, and organ at Wellesley College in Massachusetts, and also studied music theory and choral arranging at Southern Methodist University. The Choristers Guild published her first anthem, “Cannon of Praise” in 1969. Natalie was married to Ronald Sleeth, a United Methodist pastor and professor at Perkins School of Theology. Together they had two children.

Shortly after the completion of “A Hymn of Promise” Natalie’s husband was diagnosed with a terminal illness. Ronald Sleeth requested that the original anthem version with its beauty, simplicity and sound theology be sung at his funeral. This was Natalie’s testimony that death is not the final word; there is life after death; and hope for the future is always possible.

Natalie went on to write many more songs after her husband’s death, a total of 180 published works, many for children and children’s choirs. Her music, especially “In the Bulb,” have inspired countless people to have hope.

Spring is a season that stimulates hope. Streams and rivers filled with melted snow will begin to run again. Crocuses and tulips pop out of the ground. Fruit trees will be covered in blossoms. Easter is about new life and new beginnings. We are the people of resurrection, and as Christians, we believe that death will not be the last word, no matter what happens. Look to the flower in the bulb, new possibilities, the unexpected, and believe in the Risen Christ.

With these thoughts I find HOPE. In that Hope, I find PEACE. In that peace, I find LOVE, and in that love, I find great JOY. May our days together be filled with HOPE and PROMISE. It is a privilege and a blessing to share in the journey of life with the people of First Church of Christ, Congregational.

**CHRIST IS RISEN,  
HE IS RISEN INDEED! ALLELUIA!**

**CONGREGATE TIDINGS**



## Mission's Center

By Christopher DeVries, Mission Chair

“May the gift of great kindness that comes from our Honored Chief Creator Sets Free (Jesus), the Chosen One, along with the love of our Creator remain with you as you walk hand in hand together with the Holy Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 13:13

*From First Nations Version, an Indigenous Translation of the New Testament*

God bless you and good day!

The Mission Board has been continuing to reorganize and revitalize our efforts and energies, as we seek ways to best serve our congregation and community. It's very exciting to think of ways we can diversify our service and giving, in ways that could hopefully connect us to groups or populations that we haven't considered before. Where do you see a need in our community? Is there a group or organization that you've always thought could benefit from the support of First Church of Christ? Don't be shy! Contact anyone on Mission with your ideas!!

### **Rally at the Alley 5/3 @ 1pm, 5/4@ 11am - Saco Valley Sports Center, Fryeburg, ME**

This is a really awesome benefit for the Way Station that is being organized by the First Christian Church of Freedom. First Christian Church of Freedom is inviting Businesses, Churches, or Organizations of all kinds to form a BOWLING TEAM.

The event will support The Way Station located in North Conway. The Way Station is a Day Resource Center for Homeless & Housing-Insecure Residents of Mt Washington Valley.

Funds raised will support The Way Station General Operating Fund (50%) and the Way Station Cold Weather Program (50%).

BOWLING TEAM: How to Become a Sponsor

#### **The cost to the sponsor:**

Financial: As little as \$200 for one TEAM

Effort: Find 4 bowlers who bowl 3 strings

Marketing: Occasional shout outs about MEMBERS

#### **The value to the sponsor (Business, Church, or Organization):**

- Enliven the spirit
- Team/Group building
- Engage people who aren't as involved and widen your own circle
- Create a vibe, be part of something bigger
- Pics of your people for your webpage/social media accounts
- Endless other benefits that are rooted in your community's own sense of service to the world.

Please keep your eyes peeled during upcoming services for announcements and video trailers about these upcoming opportunities for giving and service! I pray that you all find this full of faith and in good spirits.

### **QUARTERLY OFFERINGS:**

1st Qtr: **Gibson Center for Senior Services**

2nd Qtr: **MWV Adult Day Center**

### **NOISY OFFERINGS:**

Jan/Feb **ACTS**

Mar/Apr **Conway Dog Park**

May/June **Conway Peer Support Center**



## **IMPORTANT NOTICE!!!**

**THE *CONGREGATE TIDINGS* WILL NO LONGER BE MAILED STARTING WITH THE JUNE/2026 EDITION, UNLESS YOU ALERT DENISE IN THE CHURCH OFFICE (603-356-2324) THAT YOU WANT TO RECEIVE IT BY MAIL.**

**THIS GIVES YOU TWO FULL MONTHS TO MAKE THAT DECISION.**

**DUE TO SEVERAL PEOPLE ADVISING THAT THEY ARE RECEIVING THEIR *TIDINGS* ONCE THE MONTH IS HALF OVER, WE ARE TAKING THIS PROACTIVE MEASURE.**

**YOU ARE ALWAYS ABLE TO READ THE CURRENT NEWSLETTER ONLINE, ALONG WITH THE PRIOR MONTHS, FROM OUR**

**WEBSITE: [www.firstchurchnc.com](http://www.firstchurchnc.com).**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT THIS MODIFICATION AS WE RECOGNIZE THE NEED FOR CHANGE.**



APRIL 2026

| Sunday   | Monday   | Tuesday   | Wednesday  | Thursday  | Friday  | Saturday   |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|--|
| <p>29 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship</p>   | <p>30 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting<br/>6:30pm - 8:00pm Scouts of America Troop 150 and Pack 150</p> | <p>31 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry<br/>Open</p>   | <p>1</p>   | <p>2 9:30am - 2:30pm WIC Program<br/>12:00pm - 2:15pm Food Pantry<br/>Open<br/>7:00pm Maudy Thursday Service</p>                     | <p>3 9:00am - 3:00pm Sanctuary Open for Prayer &amp; Reflection 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>  | <p>4</p>  |
| <p>5 6:30am Easter Sunrise Service<br/>10:00am Easter Worship - Communion<br/>11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship<br/>2:00pm - 5:00pm Revolving Closet-Teens</p>  | <p>6 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>   | <p>7 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry<br/>Open</p>  | <p>8 9:00am - 11:00am Senior Non-Food Pantry</p> | <p>9 12:00pm - 2:15pm Food Pantry<br/>Open<br/>3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal<br/>4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>  | <p>10 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>   | <p>11</p>  |
| <p>12 10:00am Worship Celebration - Faith Led<br/>11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship</p>  | <p>13 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>  | <p>14 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry<br/>Open</p>                                | <p>15</p>  | <p>16 12:00pm - 2:15pm Food Pantry<br/>Open<br/>3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal<br/>4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>  | <p>17 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>   | <p>18</p>  |
| <p>19 10:00am Worship Celebration - Faith Led<br/>11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship<br/>2:00pm - 5:00pm Revolving Closet-Teens</p>   | <p>20 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting<br/>May Congregate Tidings<br/>Article due</p>                   | <p>21 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry<br/>Open<br/>4:00pm Trustees Meeting</p>  | <p>22</p>  | <p>23 12:00pm - 2:15pm Food Pantry<br/>Open<br/>3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal<br/>4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>  | <p>24 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>   | <p>25</p>  |
| <p>26 10:00am Worship Celebration - Faith Led<br/>11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship</p>  | <p>27 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting<br/>5:00pm Diaconate meeting</p>                                 | <p>28 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry<br/>Open</p>   | <p>29</p>  | <p>30 12:00pm - 2:15pm Food Pantry<br/>Open<br/>3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal<br/>4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>  | <p>1 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>  | <p>2</p>   |



**Maundy Thursday Service**  
 April 2nd – 7:00PM

**Good Friday Prayer and Reflection**  
 April 3rd – 9:00AM to 3:00PM  
*Church Sanctuary will be open for those seeking  
 a sacred space for reflection*

**Easter Sunday - April 5th**  
 Easter Sunrise Service at 6:30AM *in the Church Park across the street*  
*Continental Breakfast follows in the Church Fellowship Hall*

**Celebratory Easter Worship - Communion**  
*10:00AM in the Sanctuary*



***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 5th for your enjoyment or for delivery to a loved one.

Given by: \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory or Honor of (circle one): \_\_\_\_\_

(If given in “Memory” the person has passed. If given in “Honor” 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 1ST.**

## Crafty Hands...



Laurel Ekberg & Mary Lou Waite of the former Crafty Hands Workshop at First Church of Christ, Congregational, North Conway NH, made these charity quilts from donated fabric.

Laurel sewed all the individual blocks together while Mary Lou created the layout and finished assembling.

The two full-size quilts were gifted to the Starting Point Domestic Violence Shelter as part of a First Church of Christ Mission Outreach Project from the former Crafty Hands Workshop.

These were presented and joyously received in March/2026 following a Starting Point Presentation at a monthly meeting of 'Democracy on Tap,' a mutual aid event.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

**April 5, 2026**

**Easter/Communion Sunday**

Acts 10:34-43 or Jerimiah 31:1-6

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Colossians 3:1-4 or Acts 10:34-43

John 20:1-18 or Matthew 28:1-10

**April 12, 2026**

**Second Sunday of Easter**

Acts 2:14a, 22-32

Psalm 16

1 Peter 1:3-9

John 20:19-31

**April 19, 2026**

**Third Sunday of Easter**

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

Psalm 116: 1-4, 12-19

1 Peter 1:17-23

Luke 24:13-35

**April 26, 2026**

**Fourth Sunday of Easter**

Acts 2:42-47

Psalm 23

1 Peter 2:19-25

John 10:1-10



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



**04-03 Jessica Hodgkins**  
**04-11 Linda Hyde**  
**04-12 Patsy Perry**  
**04-15 Laurel Ekberg**  
**04-15 Claire Smith**  
**04-16 Christine Russian**  
**04-18 Barbara Starkey**  
**04-20 Dortha Seybold**  
**04-27 Fred Starkey**  
**04-30 Harvey Walker**  
**04-30 Brady Boucher**



**Jean Smykla**  
**19 Saco Street**  
**Unit #76**  
**Center Conway, NH 03813-4212**



Please pray for those dealing with illness, surgery or recovery, especially:

**Lee Coffield, Evelyn Porter, Deb Smith, Mike James, Jeff and Lois Ward, and Frances Richardson.**

**Please remember those who mourn, especially the family of June Waltz.**

**Remember those in our extended care facilities.**

*Mineral Springs:* **Liz George-Hussey**

*Mountain View:* **Jean Smykla**

**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:

## Faith & Fellowship

**Are you ready to gather again?**

**First Tuesday of each month?  
9:30AM-10:30AM?**

**A little prayer...  
Maybe a Bible study?  
Or a book study?**

**Call Denise in the Church Office  
to advise of your interest!  
(603) 356-2324**

## CHURCH & VAUGHAN STAFF

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  
Denise Ext. #1**

**Fax Number (603)356-2106**

**Vaughan Food Pantry (603)602-1801**

**Vaughan Learning Center (603)356-5213**

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