



The Congregate Tidings

Volume 39 Issue 8

August 2025

The Pastor's Piece Not A Whitman's Sampler

By Pastor Walt Hampton, J.D., CFC

I'd do it when no one was looking.

Like when my mother was upstairs folding laundry; or out to the grocery store.

Sometimes I'd do it at night. When everyone was asleep.

I'd sneak into the kitchen, open the cupboard, and pull down the box.

Of Whitman's chocolates.

My grandmother would bring them. And I loved them.

Well, most of them. Not all.

I didn't like the ones that were way too chewy. And I definitely didn't like the ones that were pink inside.

So my strategy was to go into the bottom layer, pick out a chocolate, and take a bite. If I liked it, it was game over. But if I didn't, well, I'd put it back in the box and pretend I'd never been in there.

I know. Why would I want to cop to this all of these decades later?

Perhaps, because I've discovered that it's tempting, from time to time, to treat the Gospel like a box of Whitman's chocolate.

We like some of it.

We really like the parts about peace and love and forgiveness. The parables. The loaves and fishes. The angels singing in the sky.

But then there are the chewy ones. The ones that don't go down so easy.

The parts about turning the other cheek. About selling what we have and giving it to the poor. About welcoming the stranger. Loving our enemies. Praying for those who persecute us.



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Those are harder to swallow.

And then there are the pink ones. The ones we'd rather pretend don't exist.

Woe to you who are rich.

Let the children come to me.

Blessed are the poor.

Take up your cross.

Love your neighbor as yourself.

And just in case there's any wiggle room—Jesus expands the definition of “neighbor” to include everyone. Even the ones we'd rather ignore. Even the ones we've been told to hate. Even the ones we fear.

No, the Gospel is not a sampler.

It's not a pick-and-choose box of sweet sentiments for Sunday mornings.

It's not a collection of inspirational quotes for the back of a bumper sticker.

It's not a curated list of values we can shape to fit our worldview or political platform.
The Gospel is a whole, radical way of being in the world.

It is countercultural. It is revolutionary. It is uncompromising in its demands and extravagant in its love.

It refuses to be tamed.

There are those who say that the Gospel isn't relevant anymore. That it doesn't work in this economy. That we have to take care of our own first. That we should close the borders. Protect our interests. Keep our faith private. Keep our politics clean.

But that's never what Jesus said.

Jesus never said to worship him. He said to follow him.

And following him means doing what he did. All of it.

Feeding the hungry. Healing the sick. Touching the untouchable. Forgiving the unforgivable. Calling out hypocrisy. Breaking bread with outsiders. Making space at the table. Risking everything for love.

Francis of Assisi knew this.

He took Jesus at his word.

He didn't trim the Gospel to fit his lifestyle. He didn't treat it like a sampler. He didn't nibble at the parts that felt good and set aside the parts that asked too much.

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He embraced it whole.

Rudolph Holl called him "The last Christian." Not because there weren't others who believed. But because Francis actually lived it. Audaciously. Literally. And completely.

That's not to say we all have to sell everything and wander barefoot through the woods. But it is to say: the Gospel is not a theory. It's a call.

It's a call to action. A call to transformation. A call to compassion. A call to justice.

And yes, that means it's political.

Not partisan. But political.

Because it has everything to do with how we live. With how we treat each other. With how we build systems and communities. With how we respond to suffering. With how we use our voices, our power, our time, our resources.

We are in a moment where this matters more than ever.

The world is hurting. The shadows are long. The divisions are deep. People are angry and afraid. And many feel unseen, unheard, unloved.

But the Gospel was made for times like these.

It wasn't crafted for comfort. It was forged in fire.

It was spoken into the teeth of empire. Preached on dusty roads to peasants and outcasts. Whispered in the catacombs. Shouted from prison cells.

It was lived in defiance of fear. In resistance to oppression. In solidarity with the suffering.

And it is meant to be lived now. By us.

Not in part. Not in pieces.

Not just the milk chocolate caramel parts.

But the hard ones too.

Because the Gospel isn't just about getting to heaven. It's about bringing heaven here. To the streets. To the shelters. To the courtrooms. To the border crossings. To the hospitals and the voting booths and the grocery lines.

It's about being the hands and feet of Christ.

God made flesh again. In us.

Continued on page 4...

Pastor's Piece continued from page 3...

In what we choose. In what we speak. In what we build and what we tear down. In how we show up when it's hard. In how we love when it's costly.

That's the challenge of our time.

Not to believe in Jesus. But to follow him.

To let our lives look more and more like his.

And no, we won't get it perfect. But that's not the point.

The point is to stop nibbling at the corners and step fully into the feast.

To live the Gospel with our whole lives.

To move from belief to embodiment.

To let love disrupt us.

And to let grace lead us.

So this month, I invite you to do something radical.
Choose one hard thing Jesus said—and do it.

Forgive someone who doesn't deserve it. Give without expecting a return. Speak truth to power. Open your door to someone in need. Take up your cross, whatever that looks like for you.

And then do it again.

Let the Gospel become more than a story you hear on Sunday.

Let it become the story you live.

Because the world doesn't need more milk chocolate Christians.

It needs courageous ones.

Ones who are willing to live the whole Gospel.

Not a sampler.

But the whole sweet, chewy, difficult, beautiful thing.

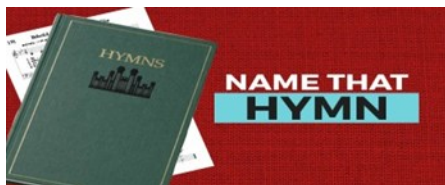
May it be so.

Peace to you,

+Walt

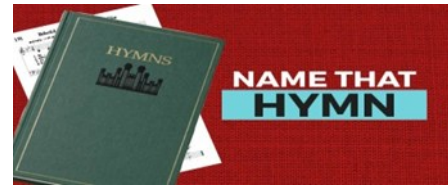


See pictures above from the Vaughan 11th Strawberry Festival. It was a great success! We made about \$16,000. Many thanks to all who volunteered and helped with this great fundraiser.



SUMMERTIME HYMN QUIZ AUGUST 2025

By Muriel Magg – Music Team Chair



Hymns can be beautiful, inspirational, rousing or somber. A few are famous, known even to non-Christians.

If you love church music, here is a quiz for you! Some are classic and traditional hymns. A few land in the African-American tradition of spirituals, and you might consider a few as "Sunday School" songs.

Can you guess these hymns from a lyric? This little quiz is designed to find out.

Answers can be found at the bottom of the page. GOOD LUCK !

1. "I once was lost, but now am found."

- A. Lord, I Want To Be a Christian
- B. Amazing Grace
- C. I'll Fly Away

2. "And exchange it some day for a crown."

- A. Jesus, Keep Me near the Cross
- B. When I Survey the Wondrous Cross
- C. The Old Rugged Cross

3. "Then sings my soul, my savior God, to Thee ..."

- A. I Love to Tell the Story
- B. The Church's One Foundation
- C. How Great Thou Art

4. "Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation."

- A. Angels We Have Heard on High
- B. O Come All Ye Faithful
- C. Angels, from the Realms of Glory

5. "O sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble."

- A. Were You There?
- B. Just a Closer Walk With Thee
- C. What Wondrous Love Is This

6. "That Jesus Christ is born."

- A. Away in a Manger
- B. Sweet Hour of Prayer
- C. Go, Tell It On the Mountain

7. "Joyful all ye nations rise."

- A. Angels We Have Heard on High
- B. Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
- C. The First Noel

8. "Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine."

- A. O Come, O Come Emmanuel
- B. Softly and Tenderly
- C. This Little Light of Mine

9. "With the cross of Jesus, going on before."

- A. How Great Thou Art
- B. Blessed Assurance
- C. Onward, Christian Soldiers

10. "It satisfies my longings, as nothing else can do."

- A. Amazing Grace
- B. I Love to Tell the Story
- C. Let Us Break Bread Together

1,B,2,C,3,C,4,B,5,A,6,C,7,B,8,C,9,C,10,B

Answer code



Deacon's Corner and more...

By Helen Goss – Diaconate Chair



August has arrived all too quickly for some. This means those warm summer days will fast become a memory, school will be starting, and we'll be preparing for a nine day Fryeburg Fair this year.

Yes, and sadly we'll be saying goodbye to Pastor Walt.

So what's next? Who's coming? Where are we headed? What is the God who is still speaking trying to tell us? Will we be open to hear the message? How long will this take? Can we be truly present to one another to do this hard work?

Change can be scary because there is so much unknown. But it also can be healthy and exciting if we work together for a united outcome. You will have the opportunity to express your desires of what you envision for the future of this church and what the leadership should look like. No Pastor can be all things to all people, but there are certain strengths and characteristics I believe we can all agree on.

The Search Committee will be appointed by the end of July and their work will begin as I outlined last month. You will know who this team of five church members are as it will be communicated in church, by email, and online. They will be choosing a Chairperson and Clerk to take the minutes of their meetings. The Chairperson will keep us informed, at least monthly, of how they are progressing. Please understand that the work they do is highly confidential when it comes to the candidates they will be considering. So their reporting can only be in regard to how the process is going. Once the Church Profile is updated and posted, they can advise of number of candidate profiles received, but nothing more. We will be praying for a full array of interested pastors from which the Search Committee can make a solid recommendation to our faith community in the coming months.

While this is happening, I ask that each of you consider where you can help. Do you have some hidden talent we have yet to become aware of? Do you have a story to tell? Do you have a voice that our choir would love added to the mix? How about ringing a bell? To join our Handbell Choir all you need to know is how to count! Or maybe you like to bake? I am not just thinking about the Fryeburg Fair, but Sunday hospitality. We are fortunate to get a sweet array from our Food Pantry each week, but there's nothing like homemade! Maybe changing up to be healthier with a fruit salad would be good and make Don Ekberg smile. And come September, would you be willing to mentor one of our youth for when they are in church to help them understand the arc of worship? These young people can be the voice we need in the community to share the good news. If we help them build their faith, they can walk the talk!

I will wrap this up by sharing that **Ken and Maryann Schiller** have rejoined/joined First Church in a lovely ceremony on July 20th. We were to have four baptisms on this Sunday as well of the Smith family that are Ken and Maryann's grandchildren. Due to illness that did not happen, but it's pending for this month. And **Ken** has already stepped up and been confirmed to once again serve on our Diaconate! The Spirit is alive and well in our beautiful community of faith! If we remind each other that we must lead with *love*, there is so much good we can share with one another and beyond.

Pastor Walt, it has been quite a ride! We will miss your heartfelt delivery of the Word each week, but through the wonder of technology can be reminded from time to time. Though your tenure with us was fleeting, it was impactful in the life of this church. May your next adventure serve you well. Godspeed!

Disaster Ministry Support

We hold those affected by the storms and flash flooding in Texas, and their loved ones, in our prayers.

The Disaster Ministry Team at the United Church of Christ has been in contact with the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator and the Conference Minister for the **South Central Conference, United Church of Christ** to monitor the situation and determine how best to support communities as we learn more about the devastation.

You can help support the relief and long-term recovery of those affected by these severe storms, and other communities that have experienced similar events across the US here: <https://ow.ly/eciJ50Wm0HR> (select "Severe Storms" as the designation.) Or you can send a check to the Conference Office with the memo "Severe Storm Offering".

White Mountain Musical Arts Bids Farewell to a Beloved Tradition with the 34th Annual Mostly Bach Festival



After 34 remarkable seasons, White Mountain Musical Arts (WMMA) will present the final program of its signature event: the Mostly Bach Festival. What you see and hear on this weekend is the result of more than three decades of two men's dreams, perseverance, and vision. Clarence Snyder and Floyd Corson directed, funded, volunteered, coaxed, encouraged, and most importantly inspired their friends, family, and colleagues to support their vision of bringing the great music of Bach and his contemporaries to life in the Mount Washington Valley.

The final event takes place right here at First Church of Christ, Saturday, August 23, 2025, at 7:30 PM and Sunday, August 24, at 4:30 PM.

With Floyd's passing last fall, we've lost our founder, guiding force, and cheerleader. This special weekend is a tribute to the founders as well as a thank you to our performers, supporters, and audience for the last 34 seasons.

White Mountain Musical Arts is appreciative to the courtesies extended by First Church of Christ since the Festival resided here.



September will be here before we know it! Time to start thinking about Blueberry Crisp! The Fryeburg Fair runs from September 27th thru October 5th. Nine days this year celebrating the 175th Anniversary of the fair! Baking begins September 22nd.

The sign-up sheets to volunteer to help baking, selling in the booth, and cleaning pans will be posted in the church entry way by early August. You can also sign-up by calling Denise in the Church Office at 603-356-2324. She'd love to hear from you!

There will be some paid staff this year to operate the booth and save some aging legs. Maybe you are the right candidate? Denise has those details to share.

Check your schedules now! Let's have some fun and make this another banner year!

Conference Minister's Corner - 07-15-2025

By Rev. Gordon Rankin (NHUCC Weekly Newsletter)

I write this week while taking a brief pause from the activities of the 35th General Synod of the United Church of Christ. We are only halfway through Synod and there are already many things I'd like to write about.

What I want to mention today is something the Reverend Shari Prestemon, candidate for the position of Associate General Minister for Love of Neighbor and Co-Executive of Global Ministries, said in her candidating speech. This was echoed the next morning in the State of the Church speech by General Minister and President, Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson. What they said was "small can still be vital".

In the New Hampshire Conference, and the United Church of Christ as a whole, we have many small churches. But the vitality of these churches is not equivalent to their size. When I visit churches, I certainly hear about some of their challenges, but even more often I hear about the amazing ministries they are carrying out. Churches of all sizes in our Conference carry out "Got Lunch" programs throughout the summer. Here at General Synod I have been talking with staff from Church World Service about all the CROP walks that are carried out by our churches of all sizes. **A couple weeks ago I visited with the Bartlett, Jackson, and North Conway churches at their tables at the North Conway Pride Celebration.** This can go on and on.

I hope one of the cornerstones of faith that we all continue to hold onto is that small can still be vital. In my experience, that is absolutely true.



"The View from My Window"

By Jennifer Perkins, Vaughan Administrator

Our days at the Food Pantry have been busy and productive. Let me start by giving a shout out to the campers at the Horton Center who dedicated 4 hours of service assisting us with the Strawberry Festival. These youthful campers along with two adult camp counselors loaded the van with our plastic tubs full of Strawberry Festival – "stations" supplies and moved them from our cellar to the Mary Lancaster Room in short order! After enjoying their bagged lunch, they changed into their swimsuits and found a river to cool off in.

The Knights of Columbus presented the Vaughan Food Pantry with a check for \$1,000.00. Vaughan F.P. also received \$248.00 from the Sons of the American Legion Squadron 46 Fish Fry held on June 20th. While on the subject of gifts, Starbucks awarded the Pantry with \$1,000.00 which will be used to purchase equipment.

The Food Pantry continues to receive USDA Commodities food on a monthly basis which is free to us. FEMA, on the other hand, suspended their financial allocations until further notice. The \$1,200.00 we were to receive would have purchased gift cards for the holiday season.


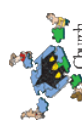



The Madison Food Pantry had their ribbon cutting ceremony Saturday June 14th which was well attended by surrounding pantry volunteers as well as Sen. Maggie Hassan (she volunteers when Madison F.P. gives their holiday baskets). We wish them all the best!

All for now!



AUGUST 2025



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship	28 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 7:00pm - 9:00pm Bach Festival Rehearsal	29 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	30	31 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open	1 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	2
3 Comunion Sunday 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS 	4 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 7:00pm - 9:00pm Bach Festival Rehearsal	5 9:30am - 10:30am Faith Fellowship 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	6	7 7:00am - 9:00am Rotary meeting 9:30am - 2:30pm W/C Program 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open	8 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 3:00pm - 7:00pm Revolving Closet Backpack Giveaway	9
10 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 11:30 am Mission Committee meeting	11 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 7:00pm - 9:00pm Bach Festival Rehearsal	12 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	13 9:00am - 11:00am Senior Non-Food Pantry	14 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open	15 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	16
17 Chris DeVries, Message 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS	18 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 7:00pm - 9:00pm Bach Festival Rehearsal	19 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 4:00pm Trustees meeting 	20	21 7:00am - 9:00am Rotary meeting 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open	22 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 7:00pm - 9:00pm Bach Festival Rehearsal	23 7:30pm Bach Festival Concert 
24 Rev. Robert Moore, Preaching 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 4:30pm Bach Festival Concert	25 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	26 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 12:30pm - 2:00pm Clergy of the Eastern Slope Luncheon 5:00pm Diaconate meeting 	27 4:00pm Music Committee meeting 	28 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open	29 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	30 Pastor's Last Day
31 Lafayette Sunday 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship	1 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	2 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	3	4 7:00am - 9:00am Rotary meeting 9:30am - 2:30pm W/C Program 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open	5 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	6

Lectionaries

AUGUST 3, 2025

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost
Communion Sunday

Hebrew Bible: Hosea 11:11-1
Hebrew Bible: Psalm 107:1-9, 43
New Testament: Colossians 3:1-11
Gospel: Luke 12:13-21

AUGUST 10, 2025

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Hebrew Bible: Isaiah 1:1, 10-20
Hebrew Bible: Psalm 50:1-9, 22-23
New Testament: Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16
Gospel: Luke 12:32-40

AUGUST 17, 2025

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Hebrew Bible: Isaiah 5:1-7
Hebrew Bible: Psalm 80:1-2, 8-19
New Testament: Hebrews 11:29—12:2
Gospel: Luke 12:49-56

AUGUST 24, 2025

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Hebrew Bible: Jeremiah 1:4-10
Hebrew Bible: Psalm 71:1-6
New Testament: Hebrews 12:18-29
Gospel: Luke 13:10-17

AUGUST 31, 2025

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

Hebrew Bible: Jeremiah 2:4-13
Hebrew Bible: Psalm 81:1, 10-16
New Testament: Hebrews 13:1-9, 15-16
Gospel: Luke 14:1, 7-14



08-02 Laura Jean Beeler
08-03 Patricia Johnston
08-08 Gilman Healy
08-19 Nichole Smith
08-20 Julie James
08-29 Stephen Woodcock
08-30 Chris DeVries



08-04 Fred & Nichole Smith
08-06 Sean & Patricia McGrath
08-16 Dan & Trina Jones
08-17 Harvey & Eve Walker
08-26 Andy & Laura Jean Beeler
08-27 Dana & Christine Russian



Please pray for those dealing with illness, surgery or recovery, especially:
Evelyn Porter; Harvey Walker, Linda Hyde and Deb Smith.

Remember those in our extended care facilities.

Merriman House:

Liz George-Hussey and Cynthia Briggs.

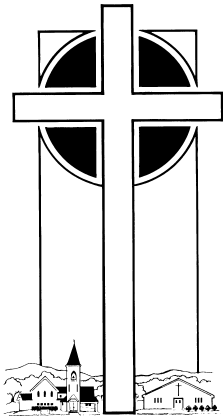
Please call the church office with prayer concerns if you wish names to be listed in the next *Congregate Tidings*.



If you need use of the church building, please contact the church office. Also, if you are willing to be Liturgist, Greeter, Usher or give flowers for the altar on Sunday, please call Denise at the church office at 603-356-2324.

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



TO:



***Pastor Walt's
Departing...***

The time has come all too soon that Pastor Walt will be leaving us.
Sunday, August 24th, will be his last Sunday.

We will remember his cliff-hanging stories that expressed the scriptures in ways none of us thought possible...

We will remember his fearless preaching and speaking truth to power in these troubled times... We will remember his bold voice, monk's robe, and huge hugs...

Please come and share in this farewell as we celebrate his ministry with us during our time of fellowship. There will be bagels and plenty of chocolate, as we remember.

Peace to you, Pastor Walt!

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
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Vaughan Learning Center (603)356-5213
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Facebook: www.facebook.com/firstchurchncnh