

## The Pastor's Piece The Journey Into Lent By Pastor Walt Hampton, J.D., CFC

"Change today?" the beggar asked.

I had passed him earlier on the street. He smiled. His teeth were yellow. The coins rattled in his cup.

"Change today?"

Perhaps I am the beggar. Or you.

Will I change today? Will you?

Of course, the answer is yes. We always do. And yet....

I don't much like change. Like many of us, I like things to stay the same. I am "comfortable" with "the way things are." I like constancy, predictability.

Here's an especially disturbing revelation: I put my coffee cup in exactly the same place next to the coffee pot every single night so that it's ready for my coffee the next morning. It troubles me if someone moves it. If you want to toy with your pastor's emotional well-being, move my cup.

Yet change is what renews, what breathes new life. Change brings us color and texture and dimensionality. Change is what makes life vibrant and exciting.

Without change, life is monochromatic and dull. Without change, there is no zest.

And this is where the looming Lenten season finds its deepest resonance. Lent invites us to embrace change – not just any change, but transformative change. This period of forty days mirrors Jesus' time in the desert, a time of introspection and confrontation with his own humanity and divinity. It's a spiritual journey that beckons us to look inward, to confront our own wildernesses.

Lent is not simply about giving up chocolate or television. It's about introspection and the willingness to confront what we find. It's about examining our patterns, our comforts, the cups we place so meticulously in our lives. It's about understanding that our spiritual well-being sometimes requires us to move our own cups, to disrupt the routine that lulls us into complacency.



Pastor's Piece	1 & 2
VLC Call to Annual	2
Pastoral Relations Prepare to Serve	3
Deacons' Corner	4
Music	5
Calendar	6
Prayer Concerns, Birthdays, Anniversaries,	7
Staff	8

## Pastor's Piece continued...

This season calls us to recognize the beggars within us – our own needs, vulnerabilities, and potential for growth. It asks us to acknowledge how we, too, seek change, in ways both large and small. Lent provides a framework for this change, not through grand gestures, but through daily acts of faith, reflection, and small, purposeful steps toward a fuller life in Christ.

The challenge of Lent is to find the balance between the comfort of the familiar and the growth that comes from embracing the unknown. It's about finding the courage to ask ourselves, "Will I change today?" and then having the faith to take that step, however small it may be.

As we journey into the Lenten season, let's remember that change, though often uncomfortable, is the pathway to a more vibrant, fuller life. It's an opportunity to reconnect with our deepest values, to grow in our faith, and to emerge renewed, ready to embrace the world with a heart more open and understanding than before.

In this coming season of reflection and growth, let us all ask ourselves, "Change today?" and together let's answer with courage and faith.

Peace to you.

+Walt



## Vaughan Learning Center

By Heather Ouellette, Director

Vaughan Learning Center has been busy this winter. The children are so happy that there is finally snow to play in. They love sledding down the hill. This month we partnered with **Subaru** who gave over 50 warm coats to the children.

**As always, we need unscented trash bags, unscented baby wipes and laminating sheets.**

## CALL TO ANNUAL MEETING

**You are hereby notified that the Annual Meeting of the First Church of Christ, Congregational, United Church of Christ, 2521 White Mountain Highway, North Conway, NH will be held on Sunday, February 18, 2024 following the 10 a.m. worship service.**

**You are asked to bring a brown bag lunch or the Mission Team will be providing one for \$5.00. Beverage will be provided.**

## Pastoral Relations Committee

### WHAT is a Pastoral Relations Committee?

Although many denominations have a Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC), how it functions and who comprises the committee may vary. For the UCC Congregational Church, the PRC is a small group of persons who provide support for the pastor and provide a *regular channel of communication* between the pastor and the congregation. The PRC functions to augment and enhance the variety of informal and formal means of *support and communication* in the congregation.

### WHY have a Pastoral Relations Committee?

There are three reasons for a congregation to have a PRC.

1. *Building up the Body of Christ*
2. *Support for the Pastor*
3. *Feedback and Communication*

In the coming months the PRC will explain each of these in more detail, offering tips on communication, emphasizing active listening. The committee is asked to meet quarterly. By providing a regular means of feedback and sharing, the PRC helps to prevent major crises and helps in the building of trust which is crucial to the function of ministry. Approaching the pastor (or any person) directly to engage in an open conversation is the recommended channel. We understand this may be uncomfortable and hope these articles will help.

The Pastoral Relations Committee:

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

## Pastor Walt To Speak At NHCUCC

Prepared to Serve 2024



On February 24, 2024, Pastor Walt will be a presenter at *Prepared To Serve* at Pembroke Academy.

Prepared To Serve is an annual event, organized by the New Hampshire Conference UCC. It's dedicated to equipping congregations with invaluable tools and resources to empower local faith communities. It's an opportunity for attendees to expand their knowledge, connect with like minded individuals, and take home resources that will enrich their congregational experience.

Pastor Walt will be speaking on church management with workshops on effective communication, the creation of standardized systems and processes, and the art and science of delegation.

## Deacon's Corner...

By Helen Goss – Diaconate Chair



We have survived the cold month of January and are *leaping* into the shortest! It's also so nice that the daylight is lasting longer for us to enjoy our time outside. When you get out of work or leave a church rehearsal, you can still see to get to your car. It's such a treat!

This month we have two very special celebrations on **February 14<sup>th</sup>**. Yes, it is **Valentine's Day** but more importantly, this year it is also **Ash Wednesday**, marking the start of **Lent**. This begins the six week time of preparation leading to Christ's resurrection on Easter. I do hope you will remember your special person(s) on this day, and also find time to come to the **Lutheran Church of the Nativity** at 15 Grove Street, just up the road from us, as we join them for this **Ash Wednesday Service**. We have been invited to join them for this service as Pastor Walt will be away on retreat. You will have the opportunity to receive ashes, which are a reminder that we came from dust and to dust we will return.

It is customary for people to give something up for Lent; a true self-sacrifice. And why do we do this? As Christians, in a small way, we are trying to replicate the hardship Jesus experienced during his 40 days in the wilderness. Many people give up chocolate or sweets or even fast during this time, but I think harder for most would be to give up social media! It truly is something to consider.

**Prepared to Serve – *Creating New Tables*** is this month on **February 24<sup>th</sup>** in Pembroke, NH. You can plan to attend in person or virtually. It is an all-day event that several of us go to every year. There are a plethora of workshops being offered this year with **Pastor Walt being a presenter as well. His course is on "Delegation."** If you are interested in attending, please contact Helen Goss for more information. ([hwarrengoss@gmail.com](mailto:hwarrengoss@gmail.com))

**Pastor Walt will be away on the Sundays of February 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>.** We had some willing volunteers offering to give a message when we had our "*Be the Church*" Sunday in November. This is your opportunity to let me know you are ready to share your message on one of these Sundays. *I await your call with great anticipation.*

This is a leap year. What are you planning to do with that extra day in February? I hope it is something memorable as it only comes around every four years, so you will want to make it count! Might I suggest that you reach out to a friend or relative you haven't spoken with in a long time or even pay them a visit. You might even have more than one on your list. You can be that unexpected blessing for someone on this day and it will be two-fold!

***Your faithful Diaconate looks forward to welcoming you back to church soon!***

## MY SONG IS LOVE UNKNOWN

### Looking for God's love: when Ash Wednesday and VaLENTine's Day collide.

By Muriel Magg - Music Team Chair

Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day are sharing the same date for the first time since 1945. It happened two other times in the last century - 1923 and 1934. It will happen again this year 2024 and in 2029, but that will be it for this century.

Ash Wednesday begins our 40-day journey to Easter, but that doesn't mean we can't be thinking of Valentine's Day. It actually seems like a wonderful opportunity to think of what LOVE means to our Lenten journey.

When Valentine's Day falls on the first day of Lent, we are challenged to consider love in the greatest act of love - Love hanging on the cross on Good Friday. That love isn't easy. It doesn't fit on a valentine, but it's that love we keep front and center during Lent.

Of all the seasons of the Church Year, Lent is the most intensely personal. Jesus has come to suffer and die not only for everybody but for my body - FOR ME!

It is no surprise that some of the best known and loved Lenten hymns have the "first person pronoun" repeated frequently as part of the devotional content of the verse. "When I survey the wondrous cross" and "My faith looks up to Thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary" and with British hymn writer Samuel Crossman (1623-1683) in another great hymn of Lent we sing "My song is love unknown." Although written more than three centuries ago, the text has a contemporary sense to it. "My Song is Love Unknown" has been called one of the most sublime of all Lenten hymns. The text is taken mainly from the Gospel of Matthew.

The text of "My Song is Love Unknown" was written by Samuel Crossman, an English clergyman and was first published in 1664 as a poem in his short book *The Young Man's Meditation*. After earning a Bachelor of Divinity degree, he ministered to both an Anglican and a Puritan congregation. Being a non-separatist who tried to reconcile differences with the Anglican establishment Crossman was expelled from the Church of England along with about 2,000 other ministers with similar sympathies. Samuel renounced Puritanism, rejoined the Church of England, and became a royal chaplain and later its Dean. The tune RHOSYMEDRE was written by John Edwards (1805-1885) 176 years later and was named for the parish in northwestern Wales where the composer Samuel Crossman served as vicar.

"My Song is Love Unknown" is found on page 222 in *The New Century Hymnal*. The theme of the hymn is the unprecedented love of Christ in his sacrifice on the cross.

The first verse talks about the capacity that Christ has to love everyone, even those who have no love for Christ or his Disciples. The second stanza reminds us that Christ was sent down from his heavenly place with God to be our savior. Christ loved everyone so much, that he would die for people that he hadn't ever met or would ever know in his lifetime. Stanza three, mentions that Christ has won some hearts over, but even when Christ has won few, many still cried out for him to be crucified for no reason. In the fourth verse, Crossman questions "Why, what has my Lord done? What makes this rage and spite?" In this passage he is asking what Christ has done to deserve this. Even Pontius Pilate is confused as to why Christ should be condemned to death over the other two criminals. Stanza five ends with the loving statement: This is my Friend, in whose sweet praise I all my days could gladly spend.

From the beginning we find that this is a love song—sung to the Savior who demonstrated pure love, even to the "love-less" so that they might be "love-ly."

We don't walk this journey to Good Friday alone. God is embracing us in His love along the way.





# February 2024



Prepared to Serve 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>28</p> <p>10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship</p>	<p>29</p> <p>12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Crafty Hands Workshop</p>	<p>30</p> <p>12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p>31</p>	<p>1</p> <p>1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>2</p> <p>12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>4</p> <p>10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS</p>	<p>5</p> <p>12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Crafty Hands Workshop</p>	<p>6</p> <p>10:00am Strawberry Festival meeting 12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p>7</p> <p>9:30am - 10:30am Faith Fellowship </p>	<p>8</p> <p>1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>9</p> <p>12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>10</p>
<p>11</p> <p>10:00am Lay Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship </p>	<p>12</p> <p>12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Crafty Hands Workshop</p>	<p>13</p> <p>12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p>14</p> <p>ASH Wednesday Service at Lutheran Church 9:00am - 11:00am Essential Non-Food Pantry </p>	<p>15</p> <p>1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>16</p> <p>12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>17</p>
<p>18</p> <p>Annual Meeting 10:00am Lay Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS</p>	<p>19</p> <p>March Congregate Tidings Deadline Presidents' Day Offices Closed 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>20</p> <p>12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 4:00pm Trustees meeting 5:00pm Diocesan meeting </p>	<p>21</p>	<p>22</p> <p>1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>23</p> <p>12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Prepared To Serve Pembroke NH</p>
<p>25</p> <p>10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship</p>	<p>26</p> <p>12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Crafty Hands Workshop</p>	<p>27</p> <p>12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p> <p>1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>1</p> <p>12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>2</p>



# FEBRUARY

## BIRTHDAYS

- 02-01 Dr. Heidi Root
- 02-02 Maryann Schiller
- 02-06 Debbie Smith
- 02-08 Doris Kirk
- 02-10 Susanne Lowd
- 02-12 Richard Altenbern
- 02-13 Dale Hamilton
- 02-17 Ann Phair
- 02-22 Denise Leighton
- 02-25 Donald Ekberg
- 02-27 Don Newton
- 02-28 Craig Fillmann



- 02-04 Don and Betty Newton
- 02-11 Mike and Karen Davenport
- 02-18 Frank and Anne Polak
- 02-20 Lee and Paul Coffield

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



**Bob Borchers; Evelyn Porter; Sandy and Greg George; Linda Hyde; Patti Bean; Jesse and Linda Red Horse; Audrey Vorperian; Laura Jean Beeler; Angie Terry, Jennifer Terry's sister-in-law.**

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

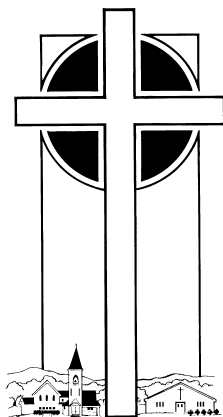
*At Mineral Springs:* **David Tilton**

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

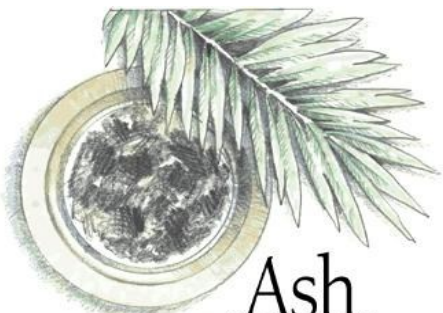
*The Congregate Tidings*  
First Church of Christ, Congregational  
United Church of Christ  
PO Box 401  
N Conway, NH 03860-0401



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



TO:



Ash  
Wednesday  
Service

**On February 14th, please join us for  
our Ash Wednesday Service at the  
Lutheran Church of the Nativity.  
Time to be announced.**

**Ashes will be administered if you  
desire.**

## 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  
Church Office (603)356-2324  
Fax Number (603)356-2106**

**E-mail address:**

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**Facebook: www.facebook.com/firstchurchncnh**

**\*Please note our newly refreshed website!**