

The Congregate Tidings

Volume 39 Issue 2

February 2025

The Pastor's Piece Less Monument, More Movement

By Pastor Walt Hampton, J.D., CFC

Our church is an extraordinary community. Loving. Welcoming. Engaged.

We celebrate the bonds that hold us together. The friendships that have spanned decades. The traditions that remind us of who we are.

And yet, we long to grow. To expand our reach. To invite others into the beauty of this place. To share the Gospel in ways that are fresh and relevant.

Here's the challenge: growth requires change. Change is never easy. Even when we say we're open to it, change can feel unsettling. It can create discomfort. Even resistance.

That's because we love what we've built. This sanctuary. These rituals. The rhythms of our life together. They are familiar. They are safe. They hold memories of weddings, baptisms, and farewells. They carry our joys and sorrows, our laughter and tears.

But here's the truth: Jesus didn't come to build monuments. He didn't come to create an institution. Jesus launched a movement.

The early Jesus movement was dynamic. Vibrant. Alive. The first followers were constantly adapting. They met in homes. They broke bread. They shared what they had. They welcomed everyone—Jew and Gentile, slave and free, men and women.

The movement thrived because it was willing to risk. To innovate. To follow the Spirit wherever it led. It was always evolving, always reaching out. It was fearless in its embrace of love and justice.

But over time, the movement changed. In 325 CE, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. It was institutionalized. Codified. It became a machine built for efficiency and control.

The machine became a monument. Focused on preservation rather than transformation. Over time, it began to fossilize. It became more concerned with protecting its structures than embodying the Gospel. It lost the dynamism that had made it a source of life.

Yet, the Spirit cannot be contained. It keeps moving. Calling us back to the life and vitality of the movement. Calling us to be dynamic, creative, and open.

As a church, we stand at a crossroads. Do we cling to the monument? Or do we embrace the movement?

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This isn't about tearing down what we love. It's about reimagining it. Infusing it with new energy. Asking, "How can we carry the Gospel into the world today?"

Here are three ways we can do this together:

First, we can listen. Listen to the Spirit. Listen to one another. And listen to our neighbors. What are the needs in our community? Where is the Spirit leading us to respond? Listening is the first step toward renewal. It opens our hearts to the work God is already doing.

Second, we can experiment. Try new things. Not everything will work, and that's okay. Movements thrive on innovation. Let's explore new ways of worship, service, and connection. What might happen if we opened ourselves to holy imagination? How might God surprise us?

Third, we can welcome. Welcome new voices. New ideas. New people. Growth requires us to make space—to open our hearts and minds to what is unfamiliar. It invites us to extend radical hospitality and grace. It's about making room for God to work through others.

This work takes courage. It takes faith. It asks us to trust that God is with us in the movement. It requires us to let go of fear and embrace possibility. It challenges us to step into the unknown with confidence that God goes before us.

Imagine a church where children's laughter echoes in the hallways. Where newcomers find a home. Where we gather not out of habit, but with purpose and joy. Imagine us stepping boldly into the future, not as caretakers of a monument, but as disciples in motion.

Imagine a community that embodies love in action. Where outreach programs touch the lives of those in need. Where small groups offer connection and support. Where worship inspires us to live out our faith each day. Where we are truly a beacon of hope in this weary world.

We have everything we need to do this work. We have love. We have faith. And we have one another.

Let's honor our traditions by breathing new life into them. Let's celebrate our past while stepping boldly into the future. Let's be the movement Jesus calls us to be.

Less monument. More movement.

May it be so.

Peace to you.

+Walt

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 16, 2025 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. Beverages will be provided.

Pastor Walt To Speak At *Prepared To Serve*



Pastor Walt will be speaking again this year at Prepared To Serve.

Prepared to Serve is the annual winter event offered by the New Hampshire Conference of the UCC that features dozens of valuable programs and workshops. It's a great day to boost skills, connect with others who share your vision for the future of our church, and equip you with tools and strategies to bring back here and put into practice.

Pastor Walt will be doing two programs. Back by popular demand will be his leadership training, Delegate

Like A Boss. He'll also be doing two sessions on Rebuilding Church, supporting the theme of the conference, Regeneration and Renewal.

Prepared to Serve is Saturday, February 22, 2025, in Pembroke, NH. Connect with Denise in the church office for more information and registration details.

CRAFTY HANDS WORKSHOP
DROP IN WHENEVER YOU ARE FREE
February, March & April
Mission Outreach Projects
Reverence for Life Building
Mondays 6:30 to 8 p.m.
(No Monday Holidays)
Questions: Contact Mary Lou Waite
508-272-0734

Deacon's Corner...

By Helen Goss – Diaconate Chair

We have made it past a very cold January and are zooming into February! I know we are not all ice climbers, but we do all have the New England spirit. I am most grateful for all of you that have come out each week to walk like penguins to attend church. The numbers show that bitter cold didn't stop many!

We welcomed **Patrick Speckamp** into our Music Ministry this month. He is a wonderful pianist and soon you will hear him making our organ sing! We are once again blessed with his beautiful musical talents and humble soul. Muriel Magg has a renewed smile on her face as she happily resumes her seat in the choir. As the song goes, *Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place!*

We experienced another **Lay Sunday on January 12** led by **Jennifer Terry**. The Gospel Lesson on this Sunday was on the *Baptism of the Lord*. Jenni encouraged all of us to “renew our subscription” with God. She never disappoints nor fails to get to the point!

Our **Breakfast Church** on January 19 was a success! We attracted some visitors to the area by our sandwich board and the ad in the *Sun*. Our tried and true turned out to test our cooking skills and see what Pastor Walt had up his sleeve for this gathering! We will be doing this again with a few updates and more audience participation, so please share your thoughts with us to make this even better!

With great joy we welcomed **Gueneth (Gwen) Johnson** into our faith community on January 26. She has been a valued addition to our Chancel Choir for some time now. Gwen came by way of Pastor Sue Davidson who so supportive of our music program and Gwen is a passionate singer. So glad you are here, Gwen!

This is the month for *Prepared to Serve* in Pembroke, NH on **February 22**. It is an all-day event (8am to 4pm) that several of us travel to each year. There is an array of workshops being offered this year with **Pastor Walt being a presenter** once again. He has two instructional programs this year, as he describes in this newsletter. If you are interested in attending, please contact Denise Leighton in the church office for more information on registering and a course catalog. The **deadline** for preferred registration is **February 10**.

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



AMAZING WAYS MUSIC CAN BENEFIT YOUR HEALTH

By Muriel Magg

Music is the special gift that keeps on giving. Music is good for the spirit. From the lullabies we sing to quiet fussy babies to the tunes of old played in Alzheimer's Care communities, music has the power to heal, calm, inspire, and energize. Music is a fundamental attribute of the human species. Virtually all cultures, from the most primitive to the most advanced, make music. It's been true through history, and it's true throughout an individual's lifespan. In tune or not, we humans sing and hum; in time or not, we clap and sway; in step or not, we dance and bounce.

Isn't it interesting how hearing a particular song can bring back a special memory, make you feel happy, calm or pumped up? Our brains actually have different pathways for processing different parts of music including pitch, melody, rhythm, and tempo. Fast music can actually increase your heart rate, breathing, and blood pressure, while slower music tends to have the opposite effect. Is this a biological accident, or does it serve a purpose?

We often do not link music and health in the same thought, yet some studies suggest that we owe the quality of our physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual health to music. From those suffering from chronic illnesses, anxiety, or just everyday stress, music has a way of bringing joy, positivity, and relaxation back into our lives.

Music can make us feel good and be better human beings. Listening or performing music that brings us pleasure causes the release of endorphins to stimulate our sense of well-being. Music is key in enlivening Alzheimer's patients by re-awakening a memory patch in them. Playing or singing music uses the body and the brain in ways different from many other activities. Educators have long supported using music in the early stages of a child's development, and many condemn the reduction or elimination of music programs in schools as a loss in important development and skills-building. Most interestingly, people who participate in singing and musical ensembles improve their teamwork abilities and are in better overall health.

Few of us need no reminders of how music can heal. While we can turn to scripture to find strength and comfort, musical settings of scripture go even farther in helping us endure illness and recovery; either in ourselves or in our loved ones by conveying hope and wholeness to everyone involved.

Think about the role of music in your life. Consider ways in which music enriched your life, whether in church, school, on your iPod, MP3 player, or however you take your music, and offer thanks to God for the special gift that keeps on giving.





Sunday		Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		Saturday	
26 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship	27 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 4:00pm Vaughan Board meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Scouts of America Troop 150 and Pack 150	28 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 12:30pm - 2:00pm Clergy of the Eastern Slope Luncheon 5:00pm Diaconate meeting	29 9:30am - 10:30am Faith Fellowship 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	30 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	31 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	1 Prepared To Serve - Pembroke Academy	2 10:00am Communion Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS	3 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Scouts of America Troop 150 and Pack 150	4 9:30am - 10:30am Faith Fellowship 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	5 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	6 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 5:00pm - 7:00pm Empty Bowls-Kennett High School	7 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	8 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting
9 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 11:30am Mission Committee meeting	10 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Scouts of America Troop 150 and Pack 150	11 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	12 9:00am - 11:00am Essential Non-Food Pantry	13 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	14 Happy Valentine's Day 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	15 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	16 Church Annual Meeting 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS	17 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Scouts of America Troop 150 and Pack 150 Offices Closed Presidents' Day	18 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open March Congregate Tidings Articles Due 4:00pm Trustees meeting	19 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	20 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	21 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	22 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting
23 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship	24 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Scouts of America Troop 150 and Pack 150	25 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 12:30pm - 2:00pm Clergy of the Eastern Slope Luncheon 5:00pm Diaconate meeting	26 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	27 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open	28 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	1							



- 02-01 Dr. Heidi Root
- 02-02 Maryann Schiller
- 02-06 Debbie Smith
- 02-10 Susanne Lowd
- 02-12 Richard Altenbern
- 02-15 Alicia Porkka
- 02-17 Ann Phair
- 02-22 Denise Leighton
- 02-25 Donald Ekberg
- 02-27 Don Newton
- 02-28 Craig Fillmann

Address Change:

Lee and Paul Coffield
 18 Mount Lyman Way
 Center Conway, NH 03813
 Home Phone #603-307-1079

New Member Address:
Christopher DeVries
 185 Artist Fall Road, #3
 North Conway, NH 03860
 Cell Phone #603-832-6077



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

Lectionaries

FEBRUARY 2, 2025

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
Communion Sunday

Jeremiah 1:4-10
 1 Corinthians 13:1-13
 Luke 4:21-30

FEBRUARY 9, 2025

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 6:1-8 [9-13]
 1 Corinthians 15:1-11
 Luke 5:1-11

FEBRUARY 16, 2025

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

Jeremiah 17:5-10
 1 Corinthians 15:12-20
 Luke 6:17-26

FEBRUARY 23, 2025

Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany

Genesis 45:3-11, 15
 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50
 Luke 6:27-38



Please pray for those dealing with illness, surgery or recovery, especially: **Tony; Evelyn Porter; Linda Hyde; Jesse & Linda Red Horse; Angie Terry, Jennifer Terry's sister-in-law; Mary Gaudette; Mary (Mae) Ellen Shea; Mary Lou Waite; and Daniel Gannon.**

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

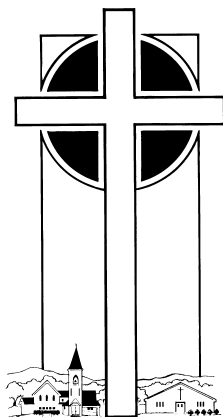
Remember those who mourn, especially the family of **Conrad (Connie) Briggs.**

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:

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:
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churchoffice@firstchurchnc.com
Church Website: www.firstchurchnc.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/firstchurchncnh

