

The Congregate Tidings

Volume 38, Issue 1

January 2024

The Pastor's Piece Beginnings

By Pastor Walt Hampton, J.D., CFC

January is a month of renewal and fresh starts. I am filled with a sense of anticipation and gratitude. This period doesn't just herald a New Year; it marks the beginning of our shared journey at First Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC. In these early days of our togetherness, we are reminded of the vibrant and ever unfolding story of Christ celebrated at Christmas, and now, the opportunity for us to embark on a path of mutual growth and discovery within our cherished church community.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1). These opening words of the Bible remind us that every start, every inception, is laden with potential and divine creativity. Just as God brought forth light from darkness and order from chaos, we too are called to participate in acts of creation and renewal. As your new pastor, I am deeply aware of the sacred trust you have placed in me, and I enter this role with a heart full of hope and a spirit eager to serve.

Beginnings are inherently filled with possibility. They are the fertile soil in which dreams and visions take root. As we embrace this new chapter, let us remember that we are not just passive observers but active participants in God's ongoing creation. The story of Christ, from the manger to the cross, is a testament to the transformative power of love and service. It is this same spirit that I believe will guide us as we embark on our shared journey.

In this season of beginnings, I invite each of you to consider how we might co-create anew. Our church, steeped in history and tradition, stands as a beacon of hope and light in our community. Yet, as we look forward, we are called to re-envision our mission and ministry to meet the needs of a changing world. This is not a task for the faint-hearted, but I see the strength, resilience, and faith that reside within you.

Co-creation is an act of faith and collaboration. It requires us to listen deeply to one another, to be open to new ideas, and to be willing to step out of our comfort zones. As your pastor, I am committed to fostering a space where all voices are heard and respected, where we can explore new ways of being church together.

The opportunity before us is as vast as it is exciting. We are called to be bearers of Christ's light in a world that often feels fragmented and dark. This means reaching out in love and service to those in our midst and beyond. It means nurturing a community where all are welcome and valued. It means being bold in our witness and humble in our approach.

As we navigate this new beginning, let us hold fast to the enduring truths of our faith. Let us be guided by the teachings of Christ, who showed us the way of compassion, justice, and peace. Let us draw strength from our shared history and hope from the promise of God's unwavering presence.

I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to serve as your pastor. I am excited about what we will create together and the ways in which God will use our community to be a blessing to others. Let us step into this new beginning with faith, courage, and a deep sense of purpose.

In Christ's love and service,

+Walt

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Meet The Pastor

I am thrilled to have the privilege of serving you as your pastor.

Ministry has been at the heart of everything I have done for decades. My core belief is that “everything is ministry.”

I did my MDiv theological work at Hartford Seminary, in Hartford, Connecticut; and my seminary training at The Chaplaincy Institute in Berkeley, California.

I hold a law degree from the Cornell Law School in Ithaca, New York.

I have served as a Director of Religious Education creating, teaching and administering programs for children from preschool age through high school; and have done many years of bible study and adult education.

My first book, *Journeys on the Edge: Living A Life That Matters*, was an Amazon bestseller and a two time recipient of the North American Book Awards.

I research, write, and teach at the intersection of law, ethics, and religion. My passion is working in Interfaith, honoring the sacred connection in all.

Having worked for years as an executive coach and leadership trainer, I have a deep bench in organizational management and administration.

I am a grief ritual leader and grief counselor. Grief is a mirror of love. And although we tend to be a grief phobic culture, when we learn to hold and walk with both grief and joy, life is richer and fuller.

I first came to the Valley with my dad when I was 10 years old to learn to climb mountains. I have since climbed and adventured all around the world and have stood on four of the Seven Summits (so far). But, the White Mountains have always been my “home” mountains.

Two years ago, my wife Ann and I moved to the Valley. Our home is in Intervale. Ann is an amazing writer and is the Publisher at Summit Press Publishing, an independent publisher of non-fiction expert positioning books. (I encourage you to tweak her by asking her why she chose to do her writing degree at Harvard rather than Cornell.)

Ann is my climbing partner, running partner, adventure partner, and best friend. We have fun all the time.

Ann has two children; I have four. They are all out in the world doing great things. We are blessed to have four grandchildren. (There are rumors of more.)

When I moved to the Valley, I became a member of the Eastern Slopes Clergy Association. We are blessed to have so many faith partners here, and it was through that association that I received the gift of discovering this amazing community of faith.

It is a gift beyond measure.

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My spiritual thread is Franciscan. (You've probably already guessed that by the Tau cross or pendant that I often wear.) I am a brother in the Franciscan Community of Francis and Clare. Francis is sometimes referred to as the "last Christian," as he had the audacity to follow literally the life of Christ. The core of Franciscan teaching is to see every other person as your brother and sister. Francis said, "Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary use words." I ask for your prayers and encouragement to live this out with you.

Peace to you.

+Walt



**Welcome Pastor Walt and
his wife, Ann!**



Deacon's Corner...

By Helen Goss – Diaconate Chair

We just experienced a wonderful Advent Season and now enter into the period of Epiphany. Pastor Sue led us beautifully through each Sunday with the gifts of being present with Hope, Peace, Joy, Love and Light. Our Sanctuary was transformed into the deep blue of the starry night awaiting the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Every week something was added or changed to welcome our members and friends. It has been a sight to behold!

Your Diaconate (Lee Coffield, Laurel Ekberg, Julie James, Muriel Magg, Fred Starkey, Gerry Tilton, and yours truly), have been busy welcoming you each Sunday and keeping you up to date on what is happening at First Church of Christ as we continue to transition between pastors. If anyone would like to join this happy group, we could use another enthusiastic disciple!

On December 31st, we transitioned from Pastor Sue Davidson to Pastor Walt Hampton to bridge the time while the Search Committee continues its discernment for a settled pastor. I cannot say it enough how grateful I am to Pastor Sue for the introduction to Pastor Walt. *Pastor Sue has served us so well in the past year* and helped to heal our fragmented faith family with the rapid departure of Pastor John. There is no question her presence will be missed, but we are thrilled to know she and Tom will be with us to continue their musical talent on the bells.

Pastor Walt has already attended a Diaconate meeting and met with the musical players in our church. We welcome him and his wife, Ann, into our midst and look forward to getting to know both of them better. You will see articles with helpful background information from Pastor Walt in this *Congregate*. We anticipate positive alterations in our worship as Pastor Walt introduces us to his manner of sharing the message.

He will be with us through Easter (the end of March), providing all Holy Week services as determined with the Diaconate. I know he is looking forward to pastoral visits, worshipping with us, performing weddings and funerals as necessary, and providing us with some other educational opportunities from his vast experience and knowledge.

Pastor Walt will be away on the following Sundays, so those who volunteered to give a message will have the opportunity to speak:

February 11th
 February 18th
 March 10th
 March 24th

I look forward to hearing from anyone that might like to help on one of these dates!

So as we say, “*Don’t be a stranger!*” to Pastor Sue and “*Welcome!*” to Pastor Walt, we look forward to seeing more of you in church and are wishing you the very best in the New Year.

Here’s to great hope for New Beginnings at First Church of Christ in 2024!

AS WITH GLADNESS, THOSE OF OLD A SONG FOR EPIPHANY

By Muriel Magg, Music Committee Chair

Epiphany, celebrated on January 6, marks the end of the Christmas season commonly referred to as the 12 days of Christmas. It's a time when we remember the magi's journey and Jesus being revealed as the Savior of the world. Epiphany is considered the start of a new season that runs through the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent.

“When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy” (Matthew 2:10)

The Epiphany hymn which draws its language and thoughts from the story of the wise ones who followed the star to the baby Jesus is “As With Gladness, Men of Old.” In the New Century Hymnal on page #159, the hymn is titled “As With Gladness, Those of Old.” Considered by many as a Christmas carol, it is found in the Epiphany section of many hymnals. This hymn also shares the same tune as “For the Beauty of the Earth.”

William Chatterton Dix (1837-1898) was born in Bristol, England, the son of a local medical doctor and poet. Most British hymn writers in the nineteenth century were clergymen, but William Dix was a notable exception. He had a passion for writing lyrics for hymns and carols. Trained in the business world, he became the manager of a marine insurance company in Glasgow, Scotland, but his heart was in the poetry of worship. It has been said of Dix that “Few modern writers have shown so single a gift as his for the difficult art of hymn-writing.” Dix wrote more than 200 poems and hymns over the course of his life, over 40 of them related to the Christmas season. Perhaps the most widely known of these is “What Child Is This”? At the age of 27, William married Juliet Wartnaby and together raised seven children.

The words and lyrics of “As With Gladness, Those of Old” were written by William Chatterton Dix on the Day of the Epiphany, January 6, 1858, while sick in bed during a months-long recovery from a near fatal illness. During this time, he read and was inspired by the story of the wise men in the Gospel of Matthew. Dix thought about how he could give the story meaning in his own life, comparing the journey of the Biblical wise men's visit to the baby Jesus with each Christian's personal pilgrimage, and as a reminder that it is not the value of gifts, it is the value of giving adoration to Jesus that is what Christians should seek. He started to write about his thoughts with the eventual result being this poem.

In stanza's 1-3, Dix likens the journey of the wise men who came to worship the Christ Child to our own search for the Savior Jesus. The pattern of these stanzas is “as they...so may we.” Stanza 4 is a prayer that our journey on the “narrow way” may bring us finally to glory where Christ is the light and where we may perfectly sing His praise.

“As With Gladness, Those of Old” is the only hymn about the wise ones that avoids referring to them as either “magi” or “kings” and does not state how many there were.

The original music was composed by Conrad Kocher in 1838 and the current tune known as “Dix,” was adapted by William H. Monk in 1861.

At Epiphany, we remember God's love for all people of the earth. How very appropriate that we celebrate Epiphany shortly before the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. “As with Gladness,” may we all journey forward in 2024 toward Christ and toward each other, so that all may be one!



MAY THE NEW YEAR BRING NEW LIGHT AND NEW HOPE TO ALL!



Glenna Tibbetts Merry & Bright at Christmas Family Night.



Pastor Sue and the children at Candlelight Service counting the Baby Jesuses.



Pastor Sue giving the Children's Message on Christmas Eve.



Sanctuary decorated awaiting the unwrapping of Love.

“The View from My Window”

By Jennifer Perkins-Administrator

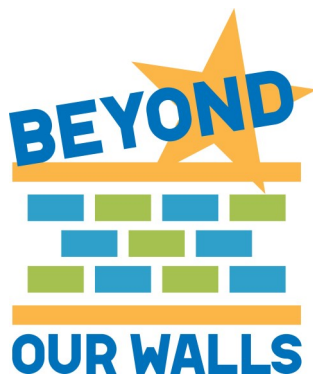
2024 is off to a busy start!

B.J. Parker, the Town of Conway’s Welfare agent, and Vaughan Community Service have partnered to bring a new program to the Valley serving people age 60 and older in need of essential non-food items. These items are anything from wound care to adult briefs, flashlights to crossword puzzles and much more!

This program will be operating out of the Vaughan Community Service Building @ 2493 White Mountain Highway on the second Wednesday of each month from 9:00AM – 11:00AM. We launch this program on Wednesday, January 10th, 2024. Please stop by and check it out!

As many of you know, due to the recent flood, the Conway Village Congregational Church (the Brown Church) experienced serious damage to their building and the loss of their Food Pantry which operated from the basement of the building. As our Congregation has reached out offering support to their Parishioners, so too has our Food Pantry to their participants. Vaughan Food Pantry welcomes the Brown Church Food Pantry and we have combined resources to serve those experiencing food insecurity. We will see some familiar and new faces around our campus during this time of regrouping. Welcome!

Warmly,
Jennifer Perkins



Lectionaries

JANUARY 7, 2024

The Baptism of Christ

Celebration of Holy Communion

Children’s Story

Old Testament Lesson: Genesis 1:1-5

Psalter Reading: Psalm 29

New Testament Lesson: Acts 19:1-7

Gospel Lesson: Mark 1:4-11

JANUARY 14, 2024

Second Sunday after Epiphany

Children’s Story

Old Testament Lesson: 1 Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20)

Psalter Reading: Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

New Testament Reading: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Gospel Lesson: John 1:43-51

JANUARY 21, 2024

Third Sunday after Epiphany

Children’s Story

Old Testament Lesson: Jonah 3:-15, 10

Psalter Reading: Psalm 62:5-12

New Testament Lesson: 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Gospel Lesson: Mark 1:14-20

JANUARY 28, 2024

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

Children’s Story

Old Testament Lesson: Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Psalter Reading: Psalm 111

New Testament Lesson: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Gospel Lesson: Mark 1:21-28

FEBRUARY 4, 2024

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Celebration of Holy Communion

Children’s Story

Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 40:21-31

Psalter Reading: Psalm 147:1-11, 20c

New Testament Lesson: 1 Corinthians 9:16-23

Gospel Lesson: Mark 1:29-39



Please pray for those dealing with illness, surgery or recovery, especially:
Bob Borchers;
Evelyn Porter;
Sandy and Greg George;
Linda Hyde; Patti Bean;

Audrey Vorperian; Laura Jean Beeler;
Joe Leighton and 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*.

- 01-02 Robert Smith**
- 01-06 Carol Fillman**
- 01-06 Helen Goss**
- 01-10 Karen Cameron**
- 01-10 Tyler James**
- 01-13 Carol Westervelt**
- 01-15 Rebecca Schiller**
- 01-15 Jennifer Perkins**
- 01-15 Richard P. Goss III**
- 01-19 Dan Jones**
- 01-25 Robert Seaman**
- 01-25 Conrad Briggs**
- 01-29 Kelly Drew**
- 01-29 Mary Gaudette**
- 01-31 Lucy Howland**

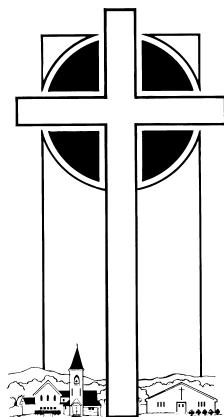


01-01 Brett and Cindy Russell

ANNUAL REPORTS ARE DUE IN THE CHURCH OFFICE NO LATER THAN JANUARY 11, 2024. THANK YOU!

The Congregate Tidings
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



TO:



Blessed New Year!

CHURCH & VAUGHAN STAFF

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Chancel Choir and Handbell Choir Director:
Anne W. Polak
Vaughan Administrator: Jennifer Perkins
Vaughan Learning Center Director:
Heather Ouellette
Church Sexton: Mark Schiller

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