

The Congregate Tidings

Volume 39 Issue 1

January 2025

The Pastor's Piece Be A Christmas People

By Pastor Walt Hampton, J.D., CFC

Christmas has come and gone. The gifts unwrapped. The decorations packed away. The tree, if you had one, is heading for the curb or back into storage.

But Christmas isn't over. Not really.

It isn't something we check off a list. It isn't a frantic season we survive. It isn't a memory we set aside. Christmas is a calling. It's who we're meant to be.

We are a Christmas people.

We believe in the incarnation. God taking on flesh. God showing up in this messy, beautiful, broken world. Jesus was the fullest expression of this incarnation.

But Jesus didn't come to corner the market on being God's presence in the world. He came to show us how it's done. He came to remind us that God is always showing up. Always wanting to be born. And that the work of Christmas is never done.

The incarnation is not a one-time event. It's an eternal reality. Richard Rohr reminds us that the Cosmic Christ has been present since the beginning of time. The Christ consciousness—God's love, wisdom, and presence—is woven into the fabric of creation itself.

When we celebrate Christmas, we remember this profound truth. God's presence is not limited to one moment or one person. It's everywhere. In everyone. In all things. And we are invited to awaken to this reality and embody it in our lives.

Howard Thurman said it best: "When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are home, when the shepherds are back with their flocks, the work of Christmas begins. To find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among others, to make music in the heart."

That's the work of Christmas. That's our work. The ongoing incarnation. God's love showing up through us.

This isn't abstract theology. It's not about head knowledge. It's about hands and feet. Hearts and voices. Being the ones who bring good news to the poor. Bind up the brokenhearted. Feed the hungry. Lift up the downtrodden.

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It's about letting God be born again and again. In your life. In your choices. In your relationships.

So how do we live this out? How do we stay a Christmas people when the lights fade and the carols stop?

Start with small things. Small kindnesses. A smile for a stranger. A phone call to someone lonely. A meal for a hungry neighbor.

Commit to larger things too. Volunteer your time. Support organizations that heal and lift up. Advocate for justice in your community. Speak up for the marginalized. Show up for those in need.

Stay mindful of your connection to all creation. Christmas reminds us that God is in all things. Every tree, every star, every creature. Even the ones we overlook. Even the ones we fear. Even the ones we don't understand.

The work of Christmas isn't always grand. It's often quiet. Hidden. Simple acts of love. A willingness to show up. A choice to forgive. A moment of grace extended.

This is the ongoing incarnation. God being born through us. Not because we are perfect. But because we are willing.

As we step into the New Year, let's carry Christmas with us. Let's keep birthing light in the darkness. Let's be the ones who refuse to give up on hope. On peace. On joy. On love.

Let's not wait for someone else to do it. Let's not wait for perfect circumstances. God doesn't wait. God shows up right in the middle of the mess. And calls us to do the same.

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We are called to be peacemakers. To sow light. To heal wounds. To mend what is broken. To live the prayer of Saint Francis:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love. Where there is injury, pardon. Where there is doubt, faith. Where there is despair, hope. Where there is darkness, light. Where there is sadness, joy.

This is our work. This is our calling. To embody God’s presence. To be Christmas people. Every single day.

So let’s do it. Let’s carry Christmas into the world. Into our homes. Into our workplaces. Into every interaction.

Let’s show up. With our hearts open. With our hands ready. With our voices lifted in hope.

Because the world needs Christmas. The world needs us. And God is always waiting to be born.

Let’s not keep Christmas behind us. Let’s live it. Let’s be it. Every day.

Let’s be a Christmas people. And let’s begin now.

Peace to you.

+Walt



Join Us For Breakfast

Join Us For Breakfast Church!

Experience Breakfast Church: A Gathering of Faith, Fellowship, and Spiritual Reflection.

Join us on Sunday, January 19th, at 8:30am in our Fellowship Hall, for a unique worship experience that blends the sacred with the ordinary in a deeply meaningful way.

Breakfast Church draws inspiration from the early Christian gatherings described in the New Testament, where believers came together around a shared meal to break bread, offer prayers, and celebrate the presence of Christ in their midst. This modern take on an ancient practice invites us to gather around the table, share a meal, and engage in heartfelt conversations, reflective readings, and communal prayers, all within a relaxed, welcoming environment.

Breakfast Church is open to everyone, whether you’re a regular churchgoer or simply curious about exploring faith in a more intimate and relational setting. Come as you are—ready to nourish both your body and soul through the fellowship and spiritual connection we’ll create together.

Join us for Breakfast Church and discover a new way to experience worship and community. We look forward to seeing you there!

Deacon's Corner...

As time goes by...

By Helen Goss – Diaconate Chair

We are about to close out 2024 and many of us are remarking on how we don't know where this year went! Some have said they want to hold on to 2024, but in reality I think they would like to back it up. Certainly, there are parts of 2024 that many of us are happy to bid farewell to, but then there is the fear of the unknown ahead and we so wish we could change that. We lost some very special souls from our faith community this year, and in turn, welcomed some new blessings. The cycle of life continues as we learn that grief and joy can coexist.

To those that are grieving as this New Year begins, I offer these words from others. "We don't move on from grief, we move forward with it." (*Nora McInerney*) "Grief is the price we pay for having truly loved. The truth is, everyone is carrying something we know nothing about. Just because someone carries it well doesn't mean it's not heavy. Grief isn't a sign of weakness. It's the evidence of love that mattered." (*Ian Simkins*) This month marks 10 years since my mother died. I miss her every day and find it hard to believe that much time has passed. But I can say the grieving has been replaced with the joy of time spent together. I had a wonderful bond with my mom and thank God daily for that blessing.

In this past year, we joyfully welcomed our new pastor! And are looking forward to positive changes at church as we consider our future and the progress we wish to make. We all recognize that change can be difficult, yet necessary if we are going to exist with a purpose for the future. There are already hopeful changes starting to percolate and we hope you will join us in our endeavors to grow the church.

I hope to have seen many of you at our Candlelight Service on December 24th and that you'll be returning as Epiphany awaits! Christmas is that magical time when we see so many returning faces to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

As we welcome in 2025, may we...

**Count our blessings –
Give to those in need –
Unwrap the prayers of our hearts –
Give thanks in all circumstances –
Offer grace to everyone we meet –
Replace our grumbles with gratitude –
And above all, cherish the joy of time
together with the ones we love the most.**

Liz Spenner



CHRIST WHOSE GLORY FILLS THE SKIES A SONG FOR EPIPHANY CELEBRATING CHRIST AS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

By Muriel Magg - Music Team Chair

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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 in the liturgical year we remember the Magi's journey and Jesus being revealed as the Savior of the world. The word "Epiphany" actually comes from the Greek meaning "manifestation" or striking appearance." In some churches, Epiphany is considered the start of a new season that runs through the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. In other churches, Epiphany is celebrated as a single day. Regardless of how you celebrate, Epiphany Sunday and the weeks that follow are about light, revelation, and glory; God manifested in the flesh, came to dwell among us. We remember all of the people who first experienced this revelation of good news: the shepherds in the fields, Mary and Joseph, and the wise men from the East.

As Matthew tells us, it wasn't simply a star in the sky that drew the Magi to Bethlehem. They recognized that the star itself was a sign, a message of something bigger. It was the light of Christ himself, revealed to the entire world, that pulled those Magi over mountains and deserts and seas to the countryside surrounding Jerusalem.

Before they even knew who he would become or what it meant for their lives, this epiphany, manifestation, appearance, changed their lives.

The hymn "Christ Whose Glory Fills the Skies" originally titled "Morning Hymn" was written by Charles Wesley, (1707-1788), who was the author of more than 6000 hymns during his lifetime. "Christ Whose Glory Fills the Skies" is considered one of Wesley's best and greatest hymns. Charles Wesley was born in Epworth, England, the son of an Anglican priest and poet. He was educated at Oxford University where his brothers also studied. Charles married Sarah Gwynne in 1749, and together they had eight children.









The first stanza of "Christ Whose Glory Fills the Skies" reveals Christ, the true and only light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. The second stanza describes what the day would be like without Christ's presence - cheerless and dark! The third stanza is our prayer for Christ to come and fill us with His radiance. RATISBON, is the tune that most often accompanies the hymn.

"Christ Whose Glory Fills the Skies" is a glorious hymn to Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, the Light of the World!





JANUARY 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>29 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship</p>	<p>30 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>31 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p> 	<p>1 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</p> 	<p>2 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</p>	<p>3 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>4</p>
<p>5 10:00am Communion Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS</p> 	<p>6 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Scouts of America Troop 150 and Pack 150</p>  <p>EPIPHANY</p>	<p>7 9:30-10:30am Faith Fellowship 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p>8 9:00am - 11:00am Essential Non-Food Pantry</p>	<p>9 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p>10 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>11</p>
<p>12 Jennifer Terry, Lay Leader 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship</p> 	<p>13 ANNUAL REPORTS DUE! 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Scouts of America Troop 150 and Pack 150</p>	<p>14 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p> 	<p>15</p>	<p>16 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>17 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>18</p>
<p>19 8:30am Breakfast Church 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS</p> 	<p>20 OFFICES CLOSED 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Scouts of America Troop 150 and Pack 150</p> 	<p>21 FEBRUARY TIDINGS DEADLINE! 9:30-10:30am Faith Fellowship 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 4:00pm Trustees meeting</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 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 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship</p>	<p>27 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 4:00pm Vaughan Board meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Scouts of America Troop 150 and Pack 150</p>	<p>28 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 12:30pm - 2:00pm Clergy of the Eastern Slope Luncheon 5:00pm Diaconate meeting</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>31 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>1</p>

Creating Safe and Welcoming Space for All

We cherish our mission to be a place of refuge, community, and spiritual growth. As part of our commitment to ensuring a safe and welcoming environment, the Board of Trustees recently adopted two important policies that followed from our fall seminar Emergency Preparedness seminar presented by the New Hampshire Department of Homeland Security.

Firearms Policy

To maintain a peaceful environment, firearms are not permitted on church property, except for active law enforcement officers. This policy reflects our desire to create a space where everyone feels secure, free from the anxiety or concerns associated with weapons.

Backpack Policy

Similarly, backpacks and large bags are no longer allowed in our worship spaces and gathering areas. While exceptions exist for small personal items and bags required for specific purposes, this measure enhances safety during services and events.

We believe these steps align with our calling to foster a space where worship, fellowship, and ministry can flourish without distraction or fear.

Signage will be installed at entrances to ensure everyone is aware of these policies, and we are grateful for your understanding and cooperation as we implement these changes.

Let us continue to be a community rooted in love, hospitality, and care for one another. If you have questions or concerns about these policies, feel free to reach out to me.

Peace to you.

+Walt

CHRISTMAS FAMILY NIGHT 2024!



“The View from My Window”

By Jennifer Perkins, Administrator

Vaughan Food Pantry ended the year in record territory for the number of people and meals served. Blessed to live in a generous and thoughtful community such as this, we were, and are, able to meet the needs of the food insecure in our Valley. Events like the 23rd Annual Mt. Washington Radio Group Holiday Fund Drive and our own Conway Police Department’s “Fill the Trailer” event at Market Basket (1,467 pounds of food collected) are instrumental in our ability to achieve success in putting food on the table for so many!

January marks our one-year anniversary of the **Senior Non-Food Pantry Program** and we are presently assisting 26 individuals and families in the Valley. Some of the items most requested are:

- Adult hygiene products
- Laundry and dish detergent
- Batteries of all type
- Paper towels
- Puzzles

To name just a few.

If anyone wishes to donate these items or would like to make a financial contribution, please visit me at 2493 White Mountain Highway, North Conway at the Vaughan Community Service building or call 603-602-1801.

Reminder:

Senior Non-Food Pantry Program is open the 2nd Wednesday of the month from 9:00 am- 11:00 am.

See you in the New Year!

Warmly,
Jennifer

Lectionaries

JANUARY 5, 2025

Second Sunday after Christmas

Communion Sunday

Jeremiah 31:7-14

Ephesians 1:3-14

John 1:[1-9] 10-18

JANUARY 12, 2025

Baptism of the Lord

Isaiah 43:1-7

Acts 8:14-17

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

JANUARY 19, 2025

Second Sunday after the Epiphany

Breakfast Church 8:30am

Isaiah 62:1-5

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

John 2:1-11

JANUARY 26, 2025

Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10

1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

Luke 4:14-21



Picture above of the Conway Police Department “Fill the Trailer” event at Market Basket.



Please pray for those dealing with illness, surgery or recovery, especially: **Tony; Evelyn Porter; Linda Hyde; Jesse and Linda Red Horse; and Angie Terry, Jennifer Terry's sister-in-law.**

Remember those in our extended care facilities:

At Merriman House:

Liz George-Hussey; Marilyn Elliott and Cynthia & Conrad Briggs

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

JANUARY



- 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 Jackson Smith
- 01-25 Robert Seaman
- 01-25 Conrad Briggs
- 01-29 Kelly Drew
- 01-29 Mary Gaudette
- 01-31 Lucy Howland

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

**Pastor Sue and Tom Davidson's new mailing address is:
42 Lamplighters Park
North Conway, NH 03860**

JANUARY

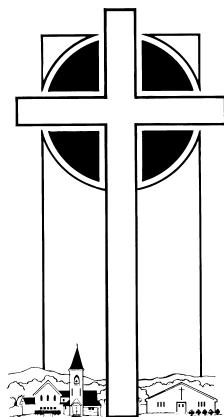


- 01-01 Brett and Cindy Russell

ANNUAL REPORTS ARE DUE IN THE CHURCH OFFICE NO LATER THAN JANUARY 13, 2025. THANK YOU!

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



TO:

Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!
First Church of Christ
Members & Friends

Thank you, to all who contributed to the
Crafty Hands Holiday Sale.

We had many donations of home crafted items,
plus the things the Crafty Hands Workshop did.

Thank you to everyone who chose to contribute
to the Missions Community Scholarship
Fundraiser.

It was a success, again, this year!

Crafty Hands Workshop meets Mondays in the
RFL building, in the Howard Room
6:30-8pm [No Monday Holidays]

Co-Leads: Deb Smith & Mary Lou Waite

CHURCH & VAUGHAN STAFF

Pastor: Rev. Walt Hampton, J.D., CFC

Church Administrator/Editor: Denise Leighton

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

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