



The Congregate Tidings

Volume 38 Issue 7

July 2024

The Pastor's Piece Make Room!

By Pastor Walt Hampton, J.D., CFC

Summertime. And the living is easy. Or so the song goes. But often, our summertime is anything but. Between cookouts, community gatherings, and the seemingly endless whirl of activities, even our vacations can leave us more exhausted than rejuvenated—needing a vacation from our vacation. Amidst this joyful chaos, it can be easy to overlook the divine presence that pulses beneath our packed schedules—the all-loving God who makes all these blessings possible.

As we enter these long, warm days filled with sunlight stretching well into the evening, I want to invite you to consider a simple, profound practice: making room for God. This isn't about carving out vast swathes of your day or altering your summer plans drastically. Instead, it's about threading moments of prayer and connection with the Divine into the fabric of your everyday life.

"A Course in Miracles" reminds us that when we make room for God, we are filled with such power that nothing can disturb our peace. Imagine that—peace that flows through you as you move from activity to activity, a tranquility that grounds you no matter how hectic your schedule gets.

The apostle Paul offers a joyful formula for this in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." These words are not just a call to prayer but to a continuous celebration of life, acknowledging and appreciating God's hand in the mundane and the magnificent.

And as we make room for God, we realize the truth of Acts 17:28: "For in him we live and move and have our being." This is not about creating a separate space for spirituality but recognizing that our entire existence is enveloped in the divine. Every breath, step, and heartbeat is an opportunity to connect with God, who is as near as our next breath.

How can we practice this? Start small. Perhaps as you sip your morning coffee, offer a brief prayer of gratitude for the new day. Or as you watch the sunset, pause for a moment to feel God's presence in the beauty of the skies. Maybe during those busy moments, take a quick second to acknowledge His presence quietly.

Consider also creating brief daily or weekly rituals that anchor you in God's presence. This could be a short morning meditation, reading a daily devotional, or writing down three things you are grateful for each night before bed. These practices can become beacons of peace, guiding you back to your spiritual center.

Involve your family and friends in these moments. Share a prayer before meals, even if it's a picnic in the park or a quick bite between summer outings. Let these small acts of faith be the threads that weave a richer, fuller tapestry of communal and personal spirituality.

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Pastor's Piece continued...

Engaging in these practices can turn even the busiest summer into a season of spiritual deepening—a time not just of physical rest, but of soulful renewal. This summer, let every invitation, every event, every moment of rest be an opportunity to connect more deeply with God. Let this be a summer not just of doing, but of being—in profound communion with the Divine.

So, as you plan your summer, make room for God. It doesn't require grand gestures, but rather, the quiet determination to recognize and cherish God's presence in all things. In doing so, you may find that your summer transforms into something extraordinary—a season of genuine peace, joy, and spiritual fulfillment.

Peace to you.

+Walt



“God's first language is silence. Everything else is a poor translation. In order to understand this language, we must learn to be silent and to rest in God.”

— Thomas Keating

IN THE LOFT WITH ELAINE PAUL

By Muriel Magg, Music Team Chair

I recently asked Elaine Paul, soprano, faithful member of the Chancel Choir and valued member of the Music Team of First Church of Christ, Congregational, to respond to a few questions about her involvement with music for the July issue of the Congregate Tidings. Please enjoy Elaine's responses which are thoughtful and sincere.



MM: How long have you been singing, and what is your most memorable experience of singing in the choir at First Church of Christ, Congregational or in any other choir or chorus?

EP: I started singing in my church choir when I was in junior high school. My beloved Episcopal church was a huge part of my childhood and growing up years. Early on I took piano lessons from a church member then progressed to organ lessons, also taught by a church member. My walk home from school took me right past my church, where I stopped to practice the organ every day after school because we didn't have an organ at home. My beloved minister was always there in his office to greet me and be sure I got a snack before I started practicing. Singing in the choir was just the logical next step. I learned early on that I liked to sing better than I liked playing the piano and organ (the organ was much too difficult for me anyway), so by high school I was taking private voice lessons and singing in the high school acapella choir instead. I am hopeful that some of the youngsters who hear us sing and play every Sunday will find their way to music the same way. Sadly, my life after childhood took me on a very different path and away from singing for many years, and it is only in the last decade or so that I have been singing with groups again and loving it so much. My fondest past and ongoing memory of First Church choir is listening to Dick Altenbern sing the Lord's Prayer! He brings his voice, his faith, and his passion to it in a way that makes me both smile and cry every time. Thanks Dick!

MM: How does singing relate to your spiritual life?

EP: Singing relates to my spiritual life in every way. The spiritual music that we sing every week is a form of prayer that nurtures my soul and my spirit beyond measure. When I am not singing, I am listening to music whenever I am by myself in the car or at home. The only time I do not listen to music at home is when the sounds of the birds, bees, and other outside wildlife fill my home with their music.

MM: Could you name some favorite anthems and hymns?

EP: There are so many favorites but my absolute favorite hymn, which was also my mother's favorite hymn, is "In The Garden." In one of Pastor Walt's recent messages, he spoke about the importance of taking time to talk with God, and not just in the sanctuary. I talk with God in my garden every day, and it nurtures my soul.

MM: What kind of music do you enjoy?

EP: I like most kinds of music: some classical and opera, some popular, and country music too because it always tells a story. Not a fan of jazz for some reason.

MM: What might we be surprised to learn about you?

EP: One thing that may surprise you to know about me is that I am the mother of an Olympic swimmer. My son, Scott, was very hyperactive as a two-year-old, and a wise and wonderful pediatrician suggested swimming lessons. Once in the pool, he hardly ever got out. He bronzed in the 200-meter men's relay in Barcelona in 1992. Competitive swimming was a great way to grow up, and watching the sun come up on many a morning while driving him to practice or a swim meet is a treasured memory.

Deacon's Corner and More!

By Helen Goss – Diaconate Chair

We are already half way through this year! How did that happen???

Your Diaconate has been faithfully on task every month working with Pastor Walt to bring you refreshing services that include a visit from Pastor Sue, every now and again. She is wonderful filling in for Pastor Walt when he has to be away and a great addition to the bell choir, as is her husband, Tom. Our cup runneth over!

We had a perfect **Children's Sunday** with a "camping" theme; I was just a little disappointed that more of you didn't get in the swing of things with proper camping attire. The children certainly enjoyed this Sunday with **Claire and Jackson Smith** receiving their Bibles, as they had not been with us at the first of the year when the rest received theirs. Claire and Jackson also did an amazing job assisting the Ushers on Children's Sunday with all their service duties. I know that Jay is always looking for new recruits, and these two are perfect candidates. We capped off the day with yummy ice cream sundaes!

The Memorial Garden has also come into its own with an overwhelming number of blossoming plants. It is a pleasure to work out there (not in the heat, though) when there can be something new every day and the company is so peaceful. I do hope you will take the time to pay a visit!

Pastor Walt has been making the rounds calling on folks by request or just to get to know our church community on a more personal level. His visits, by all accounts, have been most appreciated and well received. It has been awhile since we have had a pastor that would reach out to all with no agenda in mind. His listening skills are beyond compare.

June was **Pride** month, as recognized in our valley. I hope you had time to attend in the Community Center Park, even with it being our Strawberry Festival on the same weekend. We are an Open and Affirming church, and as such we need to be extending a warm welcome to all that might not realize how wanted they are at First Church. Pastor Walt reminds us of this every week in his message, and also has pointed out more than once that **Pride** isn't just for a month at First Church. It's recognized by our faith community year round!

To illustrate some of what I have highlighted this month, I am sharing some photos with you. As they say, "A picture can be worth a thousand words." Please enjoy and come visit us anytime. We look forward to seeing you in church and on the campus grounds!



Memorial Garden



Children's Sunday



Memorial Garden

“The View from My Window”

By Jennifer Perkins, Vaughan Administrator

4:30 Saturday morning sitting on a bench under the porch with a campfire burning and a pot of coffee perking on the grate before me. A lone robin began to call and gradually a gentle cacophony of birdsong followed. The sun peeked over the mountain and displayed its magnificent alpenglow across our valley; a beautiful, and prayerful start to the day gently interrupted by the sound of distant honking heard high in the sky. And there it was...that nearly perfect V formation. The gaggle was well on its way north with the intention of covering hundreds of miles, no doubt, that day.



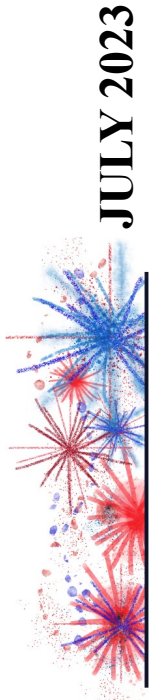
At first glance, it appears there is a lead goose and all others follow which is true in that moment, but what some may not know is the lead goose leads for a portion of the flight and must be spelled by another for the lead goose will become exhausted as it breaks through the wind. This rotation occurs all throughout the journey, giving every bird the opportunity to lead as well as follow. Many may also know that if a goose becomes sick or injured while in flight, two geese follow the impaired bird to the ground then join the flock later. What a lovely way to be in the world...Our feathered friends have it figured out!

Vaughan Learning Center


By Heather Ouellette, Director

Vaughan Learning Center is off to a good start to the summer. The kids are enjoying being outside in the sun. **July 23rd we have a fundraiser at Flatbread from 4-8pm.** They will be donating a portion of the food sales that night to Vaughan. We will have a gift card tree full of amazing gift cards. (See photo below taken by Mark Schiller of the playground with the rainbow!)





JULY 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30 All Church Picnic 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 	1 12:00am - 1:00pm AA meeting	2 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	3	4	5 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	6
7 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 11:30am Mission Committee meeting 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS 	8 12:00am - 1:00pm AA meeting	9 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	10 9:00am - 11:00am Essential Non-Food Pantry 9:30am - 10:30am Faith Fellowship 	11 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open	12 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	13
14 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship	15 12:00am - 1:00pm AA meeting	16 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	17	18 7:00am - 9:30am Rotary meeting 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 	19 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	20
21 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 11:30am Church Council meeting 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS 	22 12:00am - 1:00pm AA meeting	23 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 12:30pm - 2:00pm Clergy of the Eastern Slope Luncheon 	24	25 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open	26 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	27
28 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship	29 12:00am - 1:00pm AA meeting	30 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	31 9:30am - 10:30am Faith Fellowship 	1 7:00am - 9:30am Rotary meeting 9:30am - 2:30pm WIC Program 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open	2 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	3



07-01 Charlotte Boucher
 07-02 Amelia Edwards
 07-10 Sonya Porter
 07-13 Lisa Cote
 07-14 Stephanie Mullins
 07-19 Jay Donabedian
 07-20 Atticus Edwards
 07-20 Rebecca Mallar
 07-21 Daniel Edwards
 07-27 Gavin Boucher
 07-30 Bilo Bell
 07-31 Paul Coffield



07-06 Vinnie and Cheryl Furtado
 07-14 Bill Aughton and Jeanne Twehous
 07-20 Charles and Rebecca Mallar
 07-24 Mike and Julie James

Address Change

Jeanne Twehous
 221 Mechanic St.
 North Conway, NH 03860-5238



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

**Bob Borchers; Evelyn Porter; Linda Hyde;
 Jesse and Linda Red Horse; Laura Jean Beeler;
 and Angie Terry, Jennifer Terry's sister-in-law.**

Remember those who mourn, especially the family of **Audrey Vorperian.**

Remember those in our extended care facilities:

At Merriman House: **Liz George-Hussey; Cynthia and Conrad Briggs and Marilyn Elliott**

At Mountain View Nursing Home: **Nancy Lawson-Jacobs**

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

Lectionaries

JULY 7, 2024

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Communion Sunday

Hebrew Bible: 2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10

New Testament: 2 Corinthians 12:2-10

Gospel: Mark 6:1-13

JULY 14, 2024

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Hebrew Bible: 2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12-19

New Testament: Ephesians 1:3-14

Gospel: Mark 6:14-29

JULY 21, 2024

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Hebrew Bible: 2 Samuel 7:1-14a

New Testament: Ephesians 2:11-22

Gospel: Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

JULY 28, 2024

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

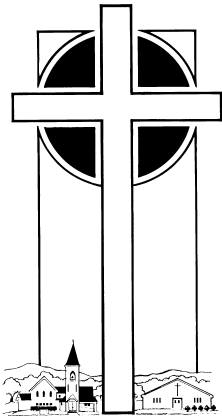
Hebrew Bible: 2 Samuel 11:1-15

New Testament: Ephesians 3:14-21

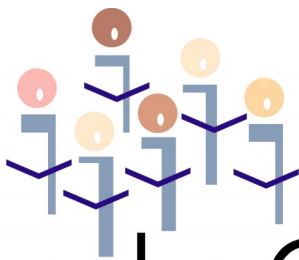
Gospel: John 6:1-21

The Congregate Tidings
First Church of Christ, Congregational
United Church of Christ
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



TO:



Thanks, Choir!

Many thanks to our Chancel
Choir and Bell Choir for all
your hard work thus far this
year.

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

Vaughan Food Pantry (603)602-1801

Vaughan Learning Center (603)356-5213

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churchoffice@firstchurchnc.com