



The Congregate Tidings

Volume 40 Issue 7

July 2026

The Anchor in the Shift

by Ruthlyn Thompson

Taken from *Manna Devotions* and edited in part by Muriel Magg

If you look around today, it is easy to see that things are shifting. We are in a season of transition. We are asking big questions about our future, navigating changes in leadership, and if we are being completely honest, some of us might be feeling a bit of anxiety about what comes next. It is perfectly okay to feel that way.



While our scenery is changing, our foundation has never been more secure. In the book of Hebrews, chapter 13, verse 8, we are given a promise that serves as our anchor during times like this: “Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

Think about that for a second. The hands that are holding our church through this transition are the exact same hands that created the universe, the same hands that walked with our church founders decades ago, and the same hands that are already standing in our future.

Transition doesn't mean God has left the building. In fact, throughout scripture, some of God's greatest moves happened during times of transition. He moved when the Israelites crossed the Jordan, He moved when the early church was scattered in the book of Acts, and He is moving right here at First Church of Christ, Congregational in North Conway, New Hampshire.

Transition is simply the space between what God has done and the new thing He is about to do. So, First Church of Christ, let's not just “survive” this season. Let's expect God to show up in it! Let's continue to be the church to one another. Keep checking in on each other, keep praying for our Search and Rejuvenation Teams, and continue to serve with joy.

Let's remind ourselves that the Church is not a building, or a single leader, but a body of believers. Our mission hasn't paused. We are still called to love God, love people, make disciples, and HOPE. Let's step together in UNITY into the good things God has prepared for us!

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Deacon's Corner and more...

By Helen Goss – Diaconate Chair



It's **July** and we are headed into the **dog days of summer**. Some folks think that the summer is "sleepy time" for churches, but not true for us! Yes, the Chancel and Bell Choirs will be taking their summer leave, but that doesn't mean we won't see many of their smiling faces each week, nor does it mean we won't have fantastic music! I know there are some guest soloists scheduled and we are never disappointed with Patrick's talents shared each Sunday. So there will be room in the pews for you to come along and share some time with us this summer.

June was a full month with **Pastor Sue Davidson** starting us off with Communion Sunday. **Steve Woodcock** led us in worship speaking to the scripture of Exodus with the battle between the Israelites and the Amalekites and the part Moses played. All while recognizing that it too was Flag Day. June is **Pride** month and was celebrated along with **Father's Day** on the June 21st. We then wrapped up the month with **Music Sunday** and **Pastor Sue** leading us once again in a day of amazing music long to be remembered! **Anne Polak** led the choirs with grace. **Patrick Speckamp** joined by **Muriel Magg** and **Christine Russian** added their magical musical touch. There is a great deal of time and effort that goes into this Sunday, and we are ever so grateful. Everyone relaxed and enjoyed the picnic that followed under the Strawberry Festival tents. **Good food...Good folks...Good times!**

This month marks one year since we all became aware that Pastor Walt was leaving. Although he wouldn't depart until the end of August, the planning process for his departure got into full swing this month one year ago. Those who have chosen to remain are to be commended for your fortitude and perseverance. It goes without saying that the struggle is real, but give yourselves credit for still being here at First Church. Showing up matters, especially when you care enough to want to see our church flourish. We are taking important steps in the healing process and need to give ourselves the time to come out refreshed and renewed on the other side.

The **Rejuvenation Team** has been meeting regularly, and the fellowship gathering after church on June 7th was well attended. The purpose was to develop a **Communication Covenant**, sharing all of our concerns on this topic. It didn't hurt that we all enjoyed a delicious potluck before the meeting to enrich our brains! Now we await the results of our time together to see what this team proposes for our adoption.

Your Diaconate is looking for willing volunteers to help bring a Sunday Message in the months of July and August. Everyone has a story to tell. Are you willing to share yours in our faith community? You will not be left alone, as there are others to help you plan and even participate in parts of the worship service. **Can we nudge you out of your comfort zone to give it a try? If so, please let one of the Diaconate members know: Muriel, Chris D., Eve, Trina, or Helen.**

Let us keep the healing spirit flowing, and continue to give loving support to one another as we move forward through these summer months.

See you in church!

CELEBRATING 250 YEARS OF FREEDOM AND FAITH

AMERICA'S UNOFFICIAL NATIONAL ANTHEM - MY COUNTRY, 'TIS OF THEE

By Muriel Magg - Music Team Chair

On the Fourth of July every year since 1776, people across the United States of America have celebrated their independence as a nation. This July, our nation marks a monumental milestone: the 250th anniversary of the United States. As we look back on two and a half centuries of history, we are called as a community of faith to reflect, give thanks, and look forward with hope.

Our nation's journey has always been intertwined with faith. The quest for religious freedom brought many of the earliest settlers to these shores. Over the past 250 years, people of faith stood at the forefront of America's defining moments. Scripture reminds us in Psalm 33:12, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." We honor the courage of those who built a nation rooted in liberty, while acknowledging the continuous work needed to fulfill that promise for all.

We enjoy freedoms today that many worldwide can only dream of. We have the right to gather, worship, pray, and serve our community and church without fear. This semi-quincentennial anniversary is the perfect time to offer deep gratitude to God for these lasting blessings. It is also an opportunity to thank generations of service members, civil servants, and everyday citizens who sacrificed to preserve our freedoms.

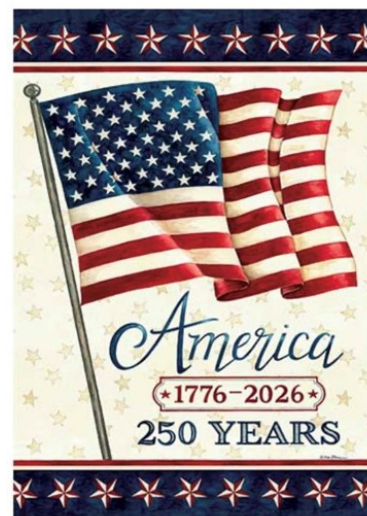
A milestone like this is not just about the past; it is about our future. We can celebrate this 250th year by joining together in prayer for unity and healing, loving our neighbors and serving the vulnerable.

The hymn "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," also known as "America," was written by a 24-year-old Baptist seminary student Samuel Francis Smith (1808-1895) in 1831 and first performed on July 4, 1831 in Boston. It served as the unofficial U.S. national anthem for almost 100 years before the "The Star-Spangled Banner" written by Francis Scott Key was formally adopted as the national anthem in 1931. Historical credit for arranging the tune is given to Lowell Mason which is the same as the British national anthem, "God Save the King."

The hymn's plea that the land long be bright with the light of freedom is a call to action for each new generation, and the hymn continues to provide inspiration to that end.

As we commemorate 250 years of America, we reflect on the source of the freedoms we cherish. God is the author of liberty, and we are grateful for those who have defended and preserved that sacred gift. May we never take these blessings for granted.

My country, tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing:
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrims' pride,
From every mountainside
Let freedom ring!



“The View from My Window”

By Jennifer Perkins, Vaughan Administrator

We at Vaughan would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who donated to our organization during the NH Gives Charitable Foundations’ annual 24-hour giving event held on June 9-10. Vaughan has been participating in this event for many years and are grateful to those who donate.

The Food Pantry continues serving our community and with school out for summer, we are busy. If anyone reading this is looking to volunteer at our pantry, please stop by and check out our operation. Volunteer opportunities are available Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Enjoy the summer!
Warmly, Jennifer

Vaughan Learning Center

By Heather Ouellette, Director

Lots of things are happening at the Learning Center. We had Pre-K Graduation, and it was so bittersweet. Most of the children who graduated started in our baby room. We will be sad to see them head off to Kindergarten, but we know they are ready.

July 14th is our Flatbread Fundraiser. Join us from 4-9 pm for great pizza. A portion sold that night will go to the center.

Looking for something else to do that week from July 10th -19th? We will receive a portion of the proceeds at Revo Casino.

Please see pictures below of the graduation.



You Can Do This Hard Thing...

By Rev. Michael Piazza

(This *Liberating Word* from Rev. Piazza is being shared as something to think about as we work through this period of discernment. I believe he puts into words the feelings of most of us. ~ Helen Goss)

"I had a Zoom chat Saturday evening with two friends and colleagues who helped keep me sane during the pandemic. We chatted often during those challenging days and compared notes about how our churches were doing and how we were doing under such extraordinary circumstances. Unfortunately, since then, we have not been in touch nearly as often. Saturday's chat made me realize how much I'd missed that.

Truthfully, there is little I miss from the nearly two years of isolation we experienced while being confined to our NYC apartment. Still, as trying as those days were, it is a testimony to our resilience that we got "back to normal" fairly quickly and easily as soon as vaccinations were available. Oh, there are still scars. Some things, like church attendance, haven't bounced back, but most of our lives have. Have you ever congratulated yourself on being stronger and tougher than you think you are? I think you should.

This affirmation should reinforce your faith in your ability to do "hard things." The pandemic probably was not the first time you had to prove that, and it won't be the last. People you love will die. You will be confronted with a difficult diagnosis. There will be wars and economic downturns that impact you but are out of your control. Family and friends will disappoint you ... and on and on. Still, you have proven you can face challenges and do hard things. God believes in you, but the missing piece is sometimes you don't believe in you. I love the familiar quote attributed to Amelia Earhart, "The most difficult thing is the decision to act; the rest is merely tenacity."


You have the power to act in ways that are strong, healthy, and compassionate. Make up your mind to do it, and then keep repeating it until you emerge victorious, whether in this life or the next."











Sunrise at First Church

Courtesy photo by Mark Schiller

JULY 2026



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>28 Music Sunday and Church Picnic 10:00am Worship Celebration - Pastor Sue Davidson, preaching 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship</p> 	<p>29 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>30 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>2 9:30am - 2:30pm WIC Program 12:00pm - 2:15pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p>3 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>4</p> 
<p>5 10:00am Worship Celebration - Faith Led 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 2:00pm - 5:00pm Revolving Clc</p> 	<p>6 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>7 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p>8 9:00am - 11:00am Senior Non-Food Pantry</p>	<p>9 7:00pm. Rotary meeting 12:00pm - 2:15pm Food Pantry Open</p> 	<p>10 Vaughan Fundraiser Revo Casino until July 19th 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p> 	<p>11</p>
<p>12 10:00am Worship Celebration - Faith Led 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship</p>	<p>13 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>14 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 4:00pm - 9:00pm VLC Fund-raiser-Flatbreads</p> 	<p>15</p>	<p>16 12:00pm - 2:15pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p>17 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>18</p>
<p>19 10:00am Worship Celebration - Faith Led 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 2:00pm - 5:00pm Revolving Closet-Teens</p> 	<p>20 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting August Congregate Tidings deadline</p>	<p>21 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23 Denise on Vacation 12:00pm - 2:15pm Food Pantry Open</p> 	<p>24 Denise on Vacation 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>25 Denise on Vacation</p>
<p>26 Denise on Vacation 10:00am Communion Worship Celebration - Pastor Sue Davidson, Preaching 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship</p>	<p>27 Denise on Vacation 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>28 Denise on Vacation 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30 12:00pm - 2:15pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p>31 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>1</p>



07-01 Charlotte Boucher
 07-02 Amelia Edwards
 07-10 Sonya Porter
 07-14 Stephanie Mullins
 07-19 Jay Donabedian
 07-20 Atticus Edwards
 07-20 Rebecca Mallar
 07-21 Daniel Edwards
 07-26 Carole Stewart
 07-27 Gavin Boucher
 07-30 Bilo Bell
 07-31 Paul Coffield

07-06 Vinnie and Cheryl Furtado
 07-20 Charles and Rebecca Mallar



**REQUESTS
 FOR
 PRAYER**

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

Jodie Neal, Lee Coffield, Evelyn Porter, Deb Smith, Mike James, and Frances Richardson.

Remember those who mourn, especially **Linda Hyde** on her brother's passing, **William "Bill" Foss.**

Remember those in our extended care facilities:

Mineral Springs: **Liz George-Hussey**

Mountain View: **Jean Smykla**

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

Lectionaries

JULY 5, 2026

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Communion Sunday

Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67

Psalms 45:10-17 or Song of Solomon 2:8-13

Zechariah 9:9-12 and Psalm 145:8-14

Romans 7:15-25a

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

JULY 12, 2026

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Genesis 25:19-34 and Psalm 119:105-112

Isaiah 55:10-13 and Psalm 65:(1-8), 9-13

Romans 8:1-11

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

JULY 19, 2026

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Genesis 28:10-19a and Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24

Wisdom of Solomon 12:13, 16-19 or

Isaiah 44:6-8, and Psalm 86:11-17

Romans 8:12-25

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

JULY 26, 2026

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Genesis 29:15-28 and Psalm 105:1-11, 45b or Psalm 128

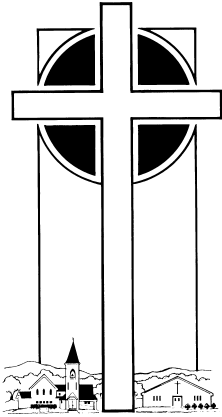
1 Kings 3:5-12, and Psalm 119:129-136

Romans 8:26-39

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



TO:



**HAVE YOU CONSIDERED YOUR FINAL
RESTING PLACE?**

No time like the present! The **Memorial Garden** is receiving a facelift over the summer/fall months. It's a great option to consider if you haven't already made plans.

Applications are available in the Mary Lancaster Room or the Church Office.

CHURCH & VAUGHAN STAFF

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
Denise Ext. #1
Fax Number (603)356-2106
Vaughan Food Pantry (603)602-1801
Vaughan Learning Center (603)356-5213
E-mail addresses:
churchoffice@firstchurchnc.com
Church Website: www.firstchurchnc.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/firstchurchncnh**