

## The Pastor’s Piece The Journey Into Lent By Pastor Walt Hampton, J.D., CFC

Well, that’s a trigger word!

For many, “repent” is laden with notions of guilt, shame and penance. Yet, at its core, repenting is really about turning around, about coming back. Grounding again in the Source of All. A call to embrace the boundless grace that awaits us when we choose to return to God.

Because, you see, we forget. We forget that we are eternal souls having an amazing incarnational experience. We get caught up in the hustle culture. We become driven by our projects; enamored of our things. We lose sight of what matters most.

Which is why on Ash Wednesday, we often hear this reminder: “Remember human, that you are dust, and unto dust you shall return.”

This isn’t meant to be a buzzkill. It’s just the facts.

So Lent is this opportunity to return again and focus on the long game.

In the scriptures, we find a God who is ever-calling, ever-welcoming.

The prophet Hosea shares a tender message from God: "Come back to me with all your heart; don't let fear keep us apart." These words echo through the ages, reminding us that our return to God should not be hindered by fear or any sense of unworthiness but is welcomed with open arms. God's desire is for unity and closeness, for a relationship that transcends the barriers we erect through our missteps and fears.

The story of the Prodigal Son is a reminder that no matter how far we wander on our own, how often we get caught up in our own egoic distractions, that as soon as we turn around, God runs to us, embraces us, and celebrates with us.

Jeremiah speaks to the depth of this divine relationship, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you." These words are a testament to God's intimate knowledge and love for each of us, a love that precedes our very existence. We are known, understood, and cherished by a God who sees beyond our failings to the essence of who we are—beloved creations made in the image and likeness of the Divine.

As Jeremiah speaks of a time before time, the Resurrection speaks to time after time.

We are an Easter people. Eternal souls.

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## Pastor's Piece continued....

Which is why Jesus' clarion call is: "Repent and believe the Good News!"

Stop the madness. Take a chill pill. Get off the hamster wheel.

Hear - *really* hear - the Good News!

You are made in the image and likeness of God. You are an eternal being. You are beloved. Beloved before you were even born; beloved from the beginning; beloved for all time.

Jesus' message is not one of condemnation but of liberation, inviting us to embrace our true identity and the love that has always been ours. The call to repentance is, therefore, a call to believe in this Good News of our inherent worth and the unending love that God has for us.

This Lent, then, let us remember that we are on a journey back to a God who awaits us with eagerness and love. Our missteps and wanderings are never final; they are merely detours on the road back to the One who calls us home. The beauty of Lent lies in this opportunity to turn around, to strip away the layers that distance us from God and from our true selves.

In these days ahead, let us commit to creating sacred spaces in our lives, away from the distractions that so often occupy our minds and hearts. Let us focus on carving out time for solitude and silence, where we can deeply connect with the presence of God. Let this season be about opening up time and space for prayer and meditation, allowing ourselves to listen more intently to God's voice. Let us use this time to reflect on the paths we've wandered from, and to renew our commitment to living in a way that reflects God's love and justice. This Lent, let our journey back to God be marked by intentional moments of quiet and reflection, fostering a deeper, more meaningful relationship with the Divine.

Most importantly, let us remember that God's love for us is unconditional and everlasting. There is nothing we can do to diminish that love; there is no place we can go where God's love cannot reach us. The journey of Lent is not about earning God's love but about returning to the love that has always been ours. God waits for us, not with judgment or impatience, but with open arms.

As we journey together towards Easter, let us hold fast to the promise of renewal and resurrection. The path back to God is paved with grace, mercy, and the reassurance that we are never alone. In every moment of repentance, in every act of turning back, God is there, welcoming us home with joy.

May this be a time of meaningful reflection, deepened faith, and joyful return. May we all find our way back to the embrace of God, who waits for us with infinite love and patience.

Peace to you,  
+Walt





## Deacon's Corner...

By Helen Goss – Diaconate Chair

Last month certainly came and went in a flash! Even though it is a leap year, that extra day was a mere blink of the eye. We begin this month of March already three weeks into our Lenten journey. Soon the first quarter of 2024 will be a memory, BUT not before we celebrate **Easter!** This is the **most** celebrated holy day in the Christian church, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. We recognize the sacrifice that Jesus made for us that we might have eternal life, rejoicing as Christ is risen. Spring is near and re-birth is anticipated!

**We hope you will be joining us for Holy Week** as we share in Palm Sunday on March 24<sup>th</sup>, Maundy Thursday, on March 28<sup>th</sup>, followed by Good Friday on March 29<sup>th</sup>. We will have an Easter Sunrise Service on March 31st in the church park across the street, as the weather permits, and our traditional Easter celebration at the 10am service that same day. **Pastor Walt** has been enriching us with great Messages each Sunday and we so look forward to what he has in store for Holy Week! The times for these services will be posted in future weekly worship bulletins and elsewhere in this publication.

The **Ash Wednesday Service** at the Lutheran Church of the Nativity that several of us attended was well done. Pastor Nathan was most welcoming. There was a group of about twenty of us to receive ashes. Alicia and Rory joined in, and I believe Rory was the youngest follower to receive ashes. Rory may be a young boy, but I believe he has an old soul. He is a most perceptive child.

On February 18<sup>th</sup> we had **Laity Sunday**, as Pastor Walt was away on retreat. Jennifer Terry gave a heartfelt message, sharing her faith journey with us. It's not easy to give a meaningful Message, let alone bare one's soul. She shared "Jenni Land" with us so that we each got to know her better and understand her tie to First Church. **She is one of our younger members, who can bring new life into our midst.** I pray more of us can channel her energy!

We lost some helpful hands with the passing of **Greg George** on February 13<sup>th</sup>. He was not a frequent church attendee, but he was a great help for several of the projects around campus. The Memorial Garden would not flourish from year to year if it weren't for Greg's guidance and help to install the sprinkler system. He will be missed. We will keep Sandy, his wife, and the George Family in our prayers for the weeks ahead as they mourn his loss.

As our thoughts turn to spring, we all need to be thinking about growing our church. We had a fruitful Annual Meeting on February 18<sup>th</sup>, but if you looked around the room, it is evident we need young people. Next month I plan to talk more about becoming a member at First Church of Christ, Congregational. It is our charge as followers of Jesus to invite our neighbors to church. Those that say they are "waiting to see who our settled pastor will be," are missing out on what we have to offer *now*. Tell them we have a funky new Bridge Pastor that they really should meet. No one can predict the future, so what is the point in waiting? If we are going to thrive, the time is now to get the word out and let people see what we are all about!

***EASTER IS HERE! COME AND CELEBRATE WITH US!***



## **“The View from My Window”**

By Jennifer Perkins, Vaughan Administrator

Nearly 60 years ago, Dr. and Mrs. Clarence Vaughan had the foresight to identify and help meet a need for young families in the Mount Washington Valley by providing affordable, quality childcare enabling both parents to work outside the home. Hence, North Conway Day Care was born and still operates today. Although the name has changed, the concept remains the same, providing affordable, quality childcare to families in the Mount Washington Valley.

Nearly 60 years later, Vaughan Community Service is launching a new program which identifies and assists in meeting the needs of seniors (60 and older) in the Mount Washington Valley. Ironically, the children of 60 years ago, grew to become the seniors of our community and yet again, there is an opportunity for Dr. and Mrs. Clarence Vaughans’ vision to continue meeting the needs of our community albeit posthumously. Life coming full circle!

Vaughan Food Pantry remains busy serving both our regular participants and our newly acquired families from the Conway Village Church. We also have a new volunteer joining the team; many locals know Charlene Gray as she is a retired nurse who assisted Dr. Marianne Jackson for many years and provided care to many moms-to-be. Charlene is a blessing for our pantry and is assisting us with our Non-Food Pantry program.

Welcome Spring!  
Warmly,  
Jennifer Perkins



**Palm Sunday Service, March 24th at 10am**

**Maundy Thursday Service, March 28th at 7pm**

**Good Friday, March 29th Prayer and Meditation 9am-4pm**

**Good Friday Interfaith Service, March 29th 6:30pm at Lutheran Church  
of the Nativity**

**Easter Sunrise Service, March 31st 6:30am in the Church Park  
with Continental Breakfast to follow**

**Easter Sunday Service, March 31st at 10am**

## NOW THE GREEN BLADE RISES CONNECTING THE CHRISTIAN EASTER STORY TO NATURE'S RESURRECTION

Page #238 in The New Century Hymnal  
By Muriel Magg - Music Team Chair

Some of the great Easter hymns we sing are hundreds of years old, with deep roots in church tradition. Old doesn't necessarily mean good, but hymns which still speak for so many years must have something good about them. A more modern classic is "Now the Green Blade Rises" written by John MacLeod Campbell Crum. It speaks to our hearts and will probably still be speaking many years from now, like the ancient Easter hymns of our spiritual ancestors.

John MacLeod Campbell Crum (1872-1958) was born in Cheshire, England of Scottish heritage. He was an Anglican clergyman, scholar, poet, and pastor, with a particular ministry to children. During his lifetime John was highly active in the Church of England. John married Edith Paget (the daughter of the Bishop of Oxford, Francis Paget) in 1908. Edith died in 1910, related to the birth of their only son. John remarried in 1913 and had five additional children by his second wife, Emily Bale. During John's lifetime he wrote many plays, pageants, hymns, and books for children.

The Easter hymn "Now the Green Blade Rises" first appeared in hymnals in 1928, the same year John became the Canon of Canterbury. Crum wrote the text to be paired with the popular French Christmas Carol and 15th century melody, NOEL NOUVELET. This tune was also used by French Organ composer Marcel Dupré for his "Variations on a Noel, Opus 20" (1922). The hymn text first appeared in the United States in 1966. Interestingly, the current text has been changed to incorporate more inclusive language.

Perhaps my love for the hymn is due to the longing for green that accompanies a bit of cabin fever after a Northern Winter. Green remains an almost universal sign of life, growth, and well-being. The Easter hymn referred to, also captures the related biblical imagery of green growth.

While firmly centered in biblical concepts and passages (John 12:23-24), this hymn speaks to our imagination in the way it combines three different ideas. The first and primary idea is the Easter story, centered on the laying of Jesus in the grave, dark and cold, not knowing that the unthinkable-unimaginable-would happen in a short time. The second idea is a direct parallel to the first, with a grain of wheat sleeping unseen in the ground, dark and cold, waiting to spring up from the earth in the form of a single blade of green. The third idea in the final verse, we are reminded why Jesus came to the earth in the first place: "For God so loved the world..." (John 3:16). After speaking directly about Jesus's death and resurrection, John Crum brings the whole story into the present and speaks of the power of Jesus's LOVE to bring about resurrection in our own lives and hearts. With "Love is come again," we are reminded that Jesus-who is LOVE-is here, just like the grain in the earth.

For us in the northern hemisphere, who live in areas where springtime usually coincides with Easter, the image of growing plants and vegetation speaks clearly. The nature imagery in one of Crum's children's hymns provides insight into his writing style and the images of the natural world found in "Now the green blade rises." Interestingly, LENT is based on an old English word "lencten," meaning "Springtime," the time of growth, of life's promise to emerge at Easter.

Singing our songs of faith, ancient and new, we can almost feel our wintry hearts thawing and our energies being renewed. We are called back to life. Love lives again and again.

We need the love and support of the community to find our way. We need others to remind us that God is indeed making all things new, that change is not useless. God's LOVE will break forth, whether we are ready or not.



Love is come again like wheat that rises green.

**CHRIST IS RISEN! ALLELUIA!**

CONGREGATE TIDINGS

## The Pastor's (Lenten) Project

By Pastor Walt Hampton

Franciscans take vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience which have been re-imaged in our community as Simplicity, Fidelity, and Humility.

The vow of poverty (simplicity) reminds us that God's love is uncomplicated and unconditional. We strive to live simply as an expression that God and God's love are enough to sustain, nurture, challenge, and bring us to fullness. We know that all we have belongs to God and that possessions are only tools. We endeavor to avoid materialism and the accumulation of wealth, power, and status. Poverty assists us in our approach to others. We strive to be open to others and believe that all is a gift from God and to be cherished. We also strive to own nothing that stands between us, God, and our neighbor.

The vow of chastity (fidelity) reminds us that God is faithful in love. This vow centers itself on God's love. We in turn aim to respond to this love by being faithful to the love that God has placed in our lives. We want our love to be marked by gentleness, mutuality, respect, and dignity. Chastity is expressed in treating another person in a way that honors their person and the Christ within them. We renounce promiscuity and casual indifference. We will not use others for our selfish gain, desire, or pleasure. The vow of chastity also guides those who wish to be celibate as is appropriate with their status in life.

The vow of obedience (humility) reminds us that God is within and without us. Obedience calls us to listen for God in the beauty of creation, in the hearts of our companions, and in those we serve. We aim to approach the world with open hearts and humility. We try never to be so full of ourselves that we cannot listen to others. We desire to place the needs of others before our own. We seek to avoid arrogance and entitlement. We believe that in our community we can rely on the many ears of our family to help us discern God's will in our lives. Obedience opens us to hear God in all manners of life and in this we develop the spirit of hospitality.

Living into these vows is an ongoing project. Not just in Lent. But always. I ask for your prayers.



# You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world.

Matthew 5:14-15 (The Message)

*"This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine...Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine..."*

If Jesus had a playlist of music, surely this familiar hymn would be among the Top Five.

Jesus teaches that faith calls for action. Sharing our light, as the diverse and colorful expression of God's love here on earth, leads to making blankets, staffing food pantries, cooking meals, building houses and schools, signing petitions for worthy causes, and protesting injustices. A simple song with a simple message—our light is on a light stand, for all to see—shine and share. On any given day, light is shining because we are there through our gifts to OGHS.

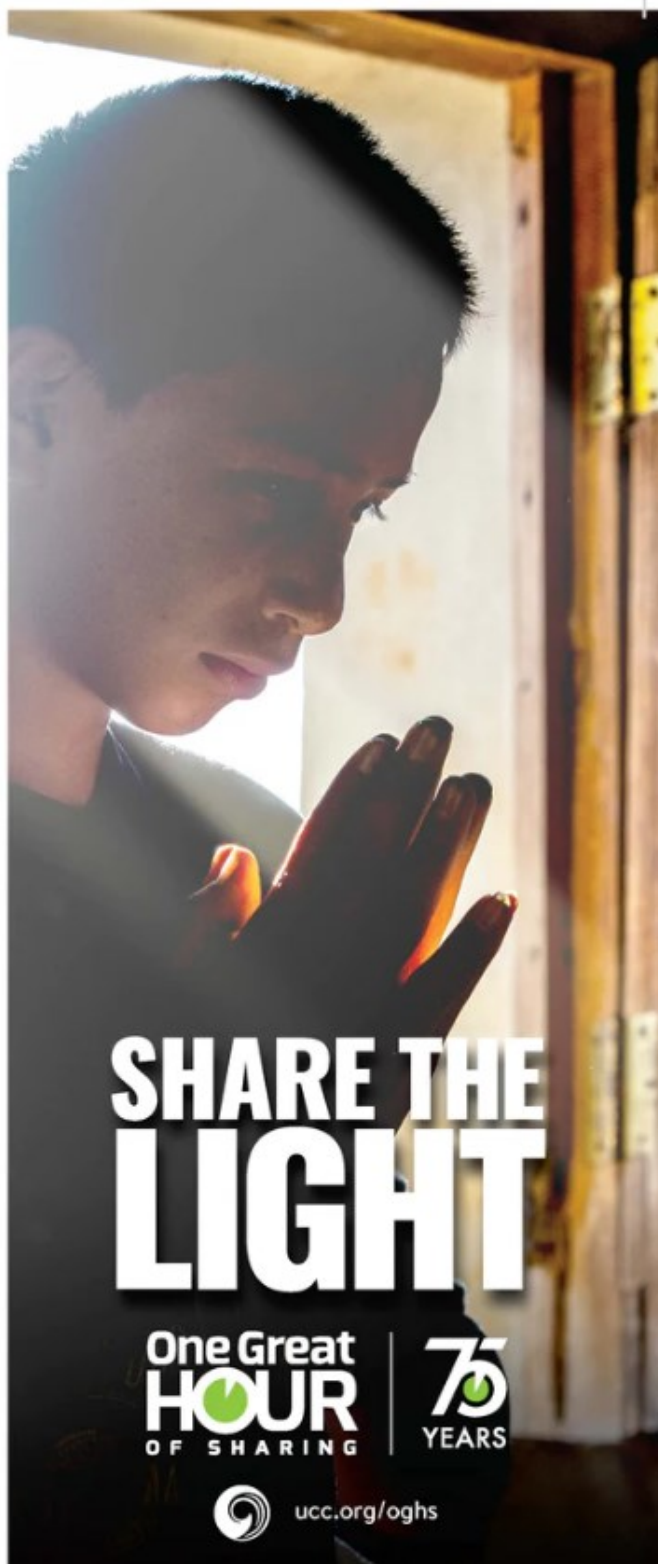
Your contributions make a difference. Your dollars count. Give generously.

**Share the light.**



SCS24B

Photo: @disciplephoto



**Please see the envelope enclosed. You may mail to the church at PO Box 401, N. Conway, NH 03860-0401 or bring it with you on Sunday, March 10, 2024, when we will be taking the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering.**





## *Easter Lilies!!!*

If you would like to purchase one in memory or in honor of someone, please provide the following information along with payment of \$10.00 (checks payable to: First Church) and the lily is yours! These can be taken home after the Easter Service on March 31st for your enjoyment or for delivery to a loved one.

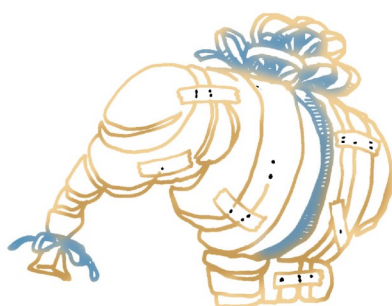
Given by: \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory or Honor of (circle one): \_\_\_\_\_

(If given in “Memory” the person has passed. If given in “Honor” the person is living.)

Your request and payment can be placed in the Collection Plate on Sunday, dropped off at the Church Office, or mailed to the church at PO Box 401, North Conway, NH 03860.

**DEADLINE TO ORDER IS WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20TH.**



## White Elephant Sale

Vaughan Community Service will hold their 10th Strawberry Festival on June 29th.

The church will be heading up the White Elephant Table again this year. So start saving your good clean treasures to donate for this benefit.

You can call the Church Office (603-356-2324) if you want to drop-off items as we get ready for the Festival.

All proceeds will be split between the Church and Vaughan for our Mission outreach.

We will need volunteers to help that day, so if you are available, please call the Church Office and let Denise know.





# March 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p><b>25</b> 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship</p>	<p><b>26</b> 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Crafty Hands Workshop</p>	<p><b>27</b> 12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p><b>28</b></p>	<p><b>29</b> 1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p><b>1</b> 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p><b>2</b></p>
<p><b>3</b> 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 11:30am Mission Team meeting 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS</p>	<p><b>4</b> 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Crafty Hands Workshop</p>	<p><b>5</b> 12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p><b>6</b> 9:30am - 10:30am Faith Fellowship </p>	<p><b>7</b> 9:30am - 2:30pm WIC Program 1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p><b>8</b> 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p><b>9</b></p>
<p><b>10</b> One Great Hour of Sharing Offering 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship</p>	<p><b>11</b> 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Crafty Hands Workshop</p>	<p><b>12</b> 12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p><b>13</b> 9:00am - 11:00am Essential Non-Food Pantry</p>	<p><b>14</b> 9:00am - 11:00am Essential Non Food Pantry 1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p><b>15</b> 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p><b>16</b></p>
<p><b>17</b> 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS</p>	<p><b>18</b> April Congregate Tidings Deadline 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Crafty Hands Workshop</p>	<p><b>19</b> 12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 4:00pm Trustees meeting 5:00pm Diaconate meeting</p>	<p><b>20</b> 9:30am - 10:30am Faith Fellowship</p>	<p><b>21</b> 1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal 5:00pm - 7:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-ADULTS</p>	<p><b>22</b> 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p><b>23</b></p>
<p><b>24</b> 10:00am Palm/Passion Sunday 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship </p>	<p><b>25</b> 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 3:30pm - 4:00pm Strawberry Festival meeting 4:00pm Vaughan Board meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Crafty Hands Workshop</p>	<p><b>26</b> 12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p><b>27</b></p>	<p><b>28</b> 1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:00pm Maundy Thursday Service</p>	<p><b>29</b> 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm Good Friday Service at the Lutheran Church </p>	<p><b>30</b> </p>
<p><b>31</b> 6:30am Easter Sunrise Service 10:00am Easter Worship Service 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship </p>	<p><b>1</b> 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Crafty Hands Workshop</p>	<p><b>2</b> 12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>4</b> 1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p><b>5</b> 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p><b>6</b></p>

## Vaughan Learning Center

By Heather Ouellette, Director

This last month has been full of many learning opportunities and loads of FUN!. The weather has been getting nicer and we all like that. We are Gearing-up for St. Patrick's Day and Easter all in the same month. Strawberry Festival and Mud Bowl meetings have begun, and we are so excited for these fundraisers along with others we are looking to do. We rely on fundraising and donations. **We are always looking for monetary donations as well as supplies, such as non-scented trash bags and baby wipes.**



## LECTIONARIES READINGS

### MARCH 3, 2024

#### *Third Sunday in Lent*

Old Testament Reading: Exodus 20:1-17

Psalter Reading: Psalm 19

New Testament Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Gospel Lesson: John 2:13-22

### MARCH 10, 2024

#### *Fourth Sunday in Lent*

Old Testament Reading: Numbers 21:4-9

Psalter Reading: Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

New Testament Reading: Ephesians 2:1-10

Gospel Lesson: John 3:14-21

### MARCH 17, 2024

#### *Fifth Sunday in Lent*

Old Testament Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34

Psalter Reading: Psalm 51:1-12 or 119:9-16

New Testament Reading: Hebrews 5:5-10

Gospel Lesson: John 12:20-33

### MARCH 24, 2023

#### *Palm/Passion Sunday*

(Liturgy of the Palms)

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Mark 11:1-11 or John 12:12-16

(Liturgy of the Passion)

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Pslam 31:9-16

Phillipians 2:5-11

Mark 14:1-15:47 or Mark 15:1-39, (40-47)

### MARCH 31, 2024

#### *Easter Sunday*

Old Testament Reading: Acts 10:34-43 or  
Isaiah 25:6-9

Psalter Reading: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

New Testament Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11  
or Acts 10:34-43

Gospel Lesson: John 20:1-18 or Mark 16:1-8



# March BIRTHDAYS

- 03-01 Jeanne Twehous
- 03-01 Fred Smith
- 03-09 Ken Schiller
- 03-11 Kelsey MacMillan
- 03-12 Francis Richardson
- 03-13 Jacqueline Howe
- 03-14 Joshua Leighton
- 03-15 Karen Davenport
- 03-19 Maureen Garrette
- 03-22 Raelynn Smith
- 03-28 Tom Davidson



Remember to set clocks ahead on Saturday March 9th before retiring for the evening. We don't want you to be late for church!!!



# March ANNIVERSARIES

- 03-16 Harry & Debbie Smith
- 03-19 Ron and Sally Kratt

## Please be Praying for...

Please pray for those dealing with illness, surgery or recovery, especially:  
**Bob Borchers; Evelyn Porter; Sandy George; Linda Hyde; Patti Bean; Jesse and Linda Red Horse; Audrey Vorperian; Laura Jean Beeler; Nancy Lawson-Jacobs; and Angie Terry, Jennifer Terry's sister-in-law.**

Remember those who mourn, especially the families of **Dale Hamilton and Greg George.**

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**

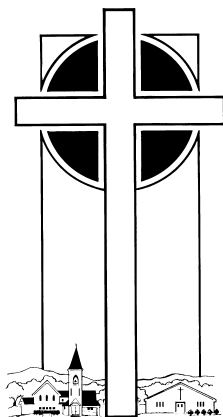
**Please call the church office with prayer concerns if you wish names to be listed in the next Congregate Tidings.**



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



**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**



**TO:**

**Breaking News...**

**April 7th- Music Sunday**

**Come join us for a memorable  
worship and musical  
experience!**



**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**  
**E-mail address:**  
**churchoffice@firstchurchnc.com**  
**Website: www.firstchurchnc.com**  
**Facebook: www.facebook.com/firstchurchncnh**