



The Pastor's Piece **What Do You Really Want To Plant?** By Pastor Walt Hampton, J.D., CFC

We have a beautiful community.

Loving. Committed. Open-hearted.

We have an extraordinary music program. Dedicated volunteers. A deep well of kindness and care.

And like many churches across the country, we are also small and aging.

We say we want to grow. We say we want to welcome new people—especially young families. We say we want a vibrant future.

But saying isn't sowing.

This time of year, the ground begins to soften. The garden beds call. We begin to imagine what we might want to plant.

Tomatoes? Peas? Basil? Zinnias?

But nothing will grow unless we prepare the soil. Nothing will bloom unless we dig in, lay seeds, water, tend.

Without planning, we won't have a garden. Without tending, we won't have a harvest.

And the same is true for our life as a church.

We want to grow.

But growth always comes with change.

We say we want new life. But new life asks us to try new things.

And that can feel uncomfortable. Even scary.

“We've never done it that way before.”

“That's not how we do things here.”

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These refrains are familiar. And understandable. They come from a place of love. From a desire to protect what's been meaningful and good.

But they are also the refrains of every dying community.

Jesus never said, "Preserve this exactly as I gave it to you."

He said, "Follow me."

And the path of following has always meant moving forward. Risking. Trusting. Planting something new—even when we're not sure what will come of it.

Our task is not to control the outcome. Our task is to be faithful in the planting.

We are stewards of the soil. Of this sacred ground called church.

We need to ask: What do we really want to plant here? What kind of community do we want to grow?

Do we want to grow generosity? Hospitality? Creativity? Courage?

Do we want to plant joy? Inclusion? Justice? Grace?

Do we want to grow a place where children laugh and new faces feel at home?

Then we have to plant that.

We have to refresh the soil. Open the windows. Let the Spirit move through our worship, our music, our life together.

That may mean trying something we've never done before. It may mean experimenting with new programs. New music. New partners. New ways of being church.

It probably won't be comfortable. But it will be worth it.

Because new people rarely come to church on their own. They come because someone invites them. They come because someone says, "I love my church—you should come with me."

They come because they feel welcome. Because there's room. Because the doors are open and the people are curious and kind.

They come because we're relevant. Because what we say and do connects with real life. Because our worship speaks to their experience. Because they see that faith still matters in this complicated world.

Churches don't grow by wishing. They grow by planting. Deliberately. Hopefully. Boldly.

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This is not about abandoning our traditions. It's about reimagining them. Breathing new life into them.

It's about creating something that honors the past and blesses the future.

Something that's rooted and reaching.

This spring, as you walk your garden or pass by fields and flower beds, ask yourself: What do I want to plant in my life?

And here: What do we want to plant as a church?

And what might bloom if we're brave together?

Because it will take all of us.

Not just a few.

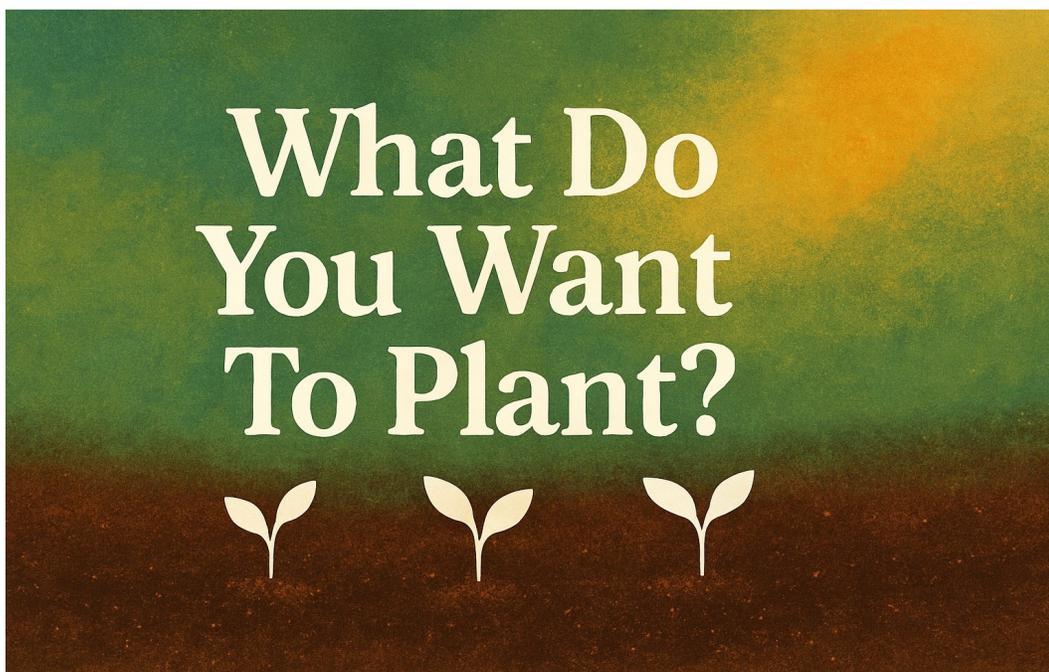
The soil is ready. The Spirit is moving.

Let's plant something bold. Let's grow something beautiful.

May it be so.

Peace to you,

+Walt



GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS

A TESTAMENT TO GOD'S FAITHFULNESS THROUGH A VERY ORDINARY LIFE

By Muriel Magg - Music Team Chair

In 1923, in a desire to express his personal life experience as a Christian, Thomas Obadiah Chisholm wrote one of the greatest poems regarding the faithfulness of God. We can only imagine how God used one of Chisholm's favorite scriptures to inspire the writing of "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," Lamentations 3:22-23. It reads: "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

Thomas Chisholm (1866-1960), who sometimes described himself as "just an old shoe," was born in a log cabin in Kentucky to parents James and Lucy Chisholm. Thomas was educated in a country schoolhouse where he himself became the teacher at the age of sixteen. At the age of twenty-one, Thomas became the associate editor of his hometown weekly newspaper. Six years later under the tutelage and preaching of Dr. H.C. Morrison, Thomas accepted Christ as his Savior and entered the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Three years later, at the age of thirty-six, Thomas Chisholm was ordained a Methodist minister but was forced to retire one year later when his health began to fail.

After a time of recuperation, Thomas Chisholm and his family moved to Indiana and later to Vineland, New Jersey where Thomas worked as a life insurance agent for the remainder of his career. He suffered from health issues for the rest of his life. There were periods of time when he was confined to bed, unable to work but continued to write over 1200 poems and hymns. Pretty impressive spiritual fruit from a life insurance agent.

In 1923, at the "beyond his prime" age of fifty-seven, Thomas wrote "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" and submitted it to William Runyon of the Moody Bible Institute. The song quickly became a favorite, and later George Beverly Shea sang it at Billy Graham crusades. Now it's known all over the world and has been used to encourage millions of Christians to trust in a faithful God.

The hymn "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" can be found on page #423 in The New Century Hymnal and has three verses and a refrain. Verse 1 is a simple expression of God's unchanging character and unfailing compassion. Verse 2 tells us of God's faithfulness revealed in creation. The seasons, the sun, moon, and stars all continue on their courses perfectly, orderly, quietly - guided by God's faithful hand, without any help from us. Verse 3 reminds us of God's faithfulness revealed in our lives. He pardons all our sins, fills us with his peace, assures us of his presence, gives us strength, hope of heaven and blessings too many to count! The hymns refrain echoes that God's promises are true, that He never changes, that His compassions never fail, and that His faithfulness to us is more than good — it's GREAT!

In retirement, Thomas Chisholm continued writing poems until his death at the age of ninety-four, with some published in various religious periodicals and set to music.

Just think, with each new day, God gives us the chance to prove His faithfulness, for His mercies are new every morning, no matter what!



Deacon's Corner...

By Helen Goss – Diaconate Chair

Ahhhh...The Merry, Merry Month of May!

I am writing this piece having just experienced the culmination of a very full Lenten Season. I cannot recall when our church has ever had the opportunity to attend six services during Lent! I'm a little weary from the preparation, but my tasks as a Deacon are nothing compared to what a pastor's work entails this time of year. And then there's the music of this season! So much practice and enthusiasm is required from all those who create this flow in the arc of worship. It humbles me as I go about set-up and hospitality tasks at our church.

We will have celebrated the life of Floyd Corson by the time you are reading this *Congregate*. Having had a sneak peek at the program, it's going to be a beautiful tribute to a very beloved man. I am most certain the music was amazing and there were heartfelt cheers from heaven! It will be a service for the ages, grateful for all participants and attendees. We have been blessed, and continue to be, by those now serving in our midst.

I want to thank Steve Woodcock for his willingness to be our Lay Leader on April 27th so Pastor could have a little down time. Anne Polak and the choir were also on leave that Sunday, as not only did they provide outstanding music during Lent, but for her Dad's service as well. Patrick Speckamp and Dick Goss helped to complete Steve's worship service on the 27th. Well done by all!

Much appreciation to Steve & Denise Woodcock for recognizing all mothers or "like mothers" with flowers on Mother's Day! There may be some of us that don't recall our mother or did not have the best relations with them or have lost their mother. On this day, May 11th, we celebrate all those that have filled the motherly role for us. Let us be glad and rejoice in it!

If you have any concerns or suggestions for worship, your Diaconate is always willing to listen. We learn through trying different things and welcome your ideas. If we aren't open to change, we will never know what just might enhance someone's worship experience.

Have you invited someone to church today?



May 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>27 10:00am Lay Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship</p>	<p>28 Denise out of office for Surgery 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Scouts of America Troop 150 and Pack 150</p>	<p>29 Denise out of office for Surgery 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p>30 Denise out of office for Surgery</p>	<p>1 Denise out of office for Surgery 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 Denise out of office for Surgery 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>4 10:00am Communion Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 11:30am Church Council 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS</p> 	<p>5 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Scouts of America Troop 150 and Pack 150</p>	<p>6 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>8 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>9 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>10</p>
<p>11 Mother's Day 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship</p> 	<p>12 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Scouts of America Troop 150 and Pack 150</p>	<p>13 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p>14 9:00am - 11:00am Senior Non-Food Pantry</p>	<p>15 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal 5:00pm - 8:00pm Dine to Donate Black Cap for Vaughan Learning Center</p>	<p>16 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>17</p>
<p>18 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS</p>	<p>19 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting June Congregate Tidings Articles are Due 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Scouts of America Troop 150 and Pack 150</p> 	<p>20 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 4:00pm Trustees meeting</p>	<p>21</p>	<p>22 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>23 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>24</p>
<p>25 Pastor Sue Davidson, preaching 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship</p>	<p>26 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Scouts of America Troop 150 and Pack 150</p>	<p>27 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 12:30pm - 2:00pm Clergy of the Eastern Slope Luncheon 5:00pm Diaconate meeting</p> 	<p>28 1:00pm Music Team meeting</p> 	<p>29 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>30 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>31</p>

LECTIONARY READINGS

May 4, 2025

Third Sunday of Easter

Acts 9:1-6 [7-20]

Psalm 30

Revelation 5:11-14

John 21:1-19

May 11, 2025

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Acts 9:36-43

Psalm 23

Revelation 7:9-17

John 10:22-30

May 18, 2025

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Acts 11:1-18

Psalm 148

Revelation 21:1-6

John 13:31-35

May 25, 2025

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Acts 16:9-15

Psalm 67

Revelation 21:10, 22—22:5

John 14:23-29 or John 5:1-9



05-02 Jim Umberger

05-03 Evelyn Porter

05-04 Sarah Eastman

05-06 Brian Croce

05-07 Walt Hampton

05-14 Carston Porter

05-16 Henry Smith

05-17 Sara Bechtold

05-23 Andy Beeler

05-25 Sharon Seaman

05-26 Jean Smykla

05-29 Mark Porter

05-29 Lisa Donabedian

05-29 Molly Donabedian



05-18 Mark and Sonya Porter

05-19 Craig and Carol Fillmann



We will be celebrating Mother's Day on the second Sunday in May like most of the world.

May 11th is a day to honor your Mother or that person who has been like a "mother" to you.

We are fortunate to have Steve & Denise Woodcock offer to provide flowers every year to anyone in the church that would like them. You are welcome to take this flower for yourself or to give to a friend or relative to recognize the day.

We thank them for their kindness in sharing a little love with all of us to help honor our Mothers on this special Sunday.



PRAYER LIST

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

Evelyn Porter; Linda Hyde; and Dick Altenbern.

Remember those in our extended care facilities. At Merriman House: Liz George-Hussey and Cynthia Briggs.

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

11th Annual North Conway Strawberry Festival June 28th

Vaughan Community Service will, once again, present the **Strawberry Festival** on Saturday, June 28th from 11AM until 4PM on the historic grounds of the First Church of Christ, Congregational. The 11th Annual Festival will feature fresh strawberries in a variety of sweet treats including; smoothies, strawberry shortcake, and hand-dipped chocolate strawberries. The **Strawberry Festival** is one of our largest fundraisers for the work of the **Vaughan Food Pantry (VFP)** and **Vaughan Learning Center (VLC)**. It is a great way to spend the day in North Conway on a beautiful summer afternoon.

All activities will take place, rain or shine, under the tent at the First Church of Christ, Congregational. Besides strawberry treats, the event also provides entertainment with live music, character visits for great family photo opportunities, displays of antique cars, free balloons, craft vendors, and more.

Please contact Denise Leighton in the church office at 603-356-2324 to volunteer to help. It's always a fun event, so come out and be part of this event that benefits our community!



Picture to the right is from the Community Seder at the Gibson Center.



Picture to the left is of the Interfaith Good Friday Service religious leaders.

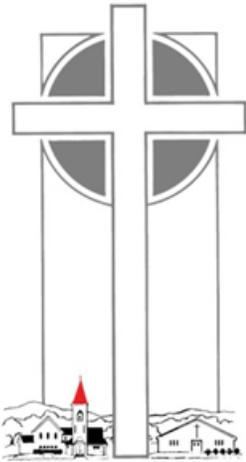
Picture below is from the Easter Sunrise Service.



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



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



TO:



**White Mountains
Pride Festival**

Saturday

June 28, 2025

10am - 4pm

We will be participating in this event to promote the radical welcome of our church.

If you can volunteer time to help, please contact Helen Goss at 603-520-6891. There are ways to support this event and the Strawberry Festival as well.

CHURCH & VAUGHAN STAFF

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

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

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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churchoffice@firstchurchnc.com

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Facebook: www.facebook.com/firstchurchncnh