



The Congregate Tidings

Volume 38 Issue 10

October 2024

The Pastor's Piece Christian Anti-Nationalism

By Pastor Walt Hampton, J.D., CFC

As we head toward the fall election, I am seeing the phrase Christian Nationalism used frequently. It's a phrase that can galvanize, polarize or confuse depending upon who is using it and how it's being used.

Christianity emerged in a time of great turmoil, during the reign of the Roman Empire—a powerful, expansive regime that held sway over much of the known world, including the Jewish people. The early followers of Jesus didn't find themselves in a position of power. Instead, they were a marginalized group, oppressed by an empire that thrived on hierarchy, dominance, and control. It's important to remember that this is the historical and social context in which the Christian faith was born—a context that stands in stark contrast to the idea of Christian Nationalism.

Jesus did not come to establish a nationalistic faith. His message wasn't about creating a new power structure to replace the Roman Empire or establishing a kingdom that mirrored the world's empires. He wasn't looking to overthrow one regime to replace it with another built on the same principles of conquest, subjugation, and domination. Rather, Jesus spoke of an entirely different kind of kingdom—one rooted in love, justice, and the dignity of every human being.

When Jesus said, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" (Matthew 22:21), it was a clear signal that his focus was not on overthrowing the Roman government or establishing a political revolution. He didn't call for his followers to build a nation-state in his name. Instead, he called for something much deeper and more profound: a transformation of the human heart and society based on the principles of love, compassion, and service to others.

The Jesus movement was, in its essence, anti-nationalistic. It was counter-cultural, subversive, and intentionally critical of how power was used by those in authority—especially when it came to the treatment of the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed. The Roman Empire was built on the backs of the vulnerable, and Jesus, in both his teachings and actions, sought to challenge that reality. His kingdom was not of this world, and his followers were called to live by a different set of values—ones that didn't align with the structures of empire and domination.

Christian Nationalism, as a concept, is fundamentally at odds with the teachings of Jesus. It is built on the idea that a particular nation can represent or embody Christianity in a way that fuses faith and political power. It suggests that being Christian is synonymous with supporting the goals of a specific nation, its leaders, or its political agenda. This conflation of faith with national identity is dangerous because it distorts the message of Jesus and turns Christianity into something it was never meant to be—a tool for advancing political power.

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Pastor's piece continued....

At its core, Christianity is a global faith, transcending national borders and ethnic divisions. The apostle Paul made this clear when he wrote, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). The early church welcomed people from all walks of life—rich and poor, free and enslaved, Jew and Gentile. It was a radically inclusive community that broke down the barriers that society had created. This is what it means to follow Jesus: to create a community that reflects the kingdom of God, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their social status or nationality.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus constantly disrupted the power dynamics of the day. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and reached out to those whom society had cast aside. He challenged the religious and political leaders who used their authority to oppress others. He called for a radical reimagining of what it means to live together in community, one that wasn't defined by the oppressive systems of the Roman Empire but by the values of the kingdom of God.

As followers of Jesus, we can live out these countercultural values by actively seeking ways to challenge systems of injustice in our communities. This might mean advocating for the marginalized, volunteering to help those in need, or supporting policies that reflect compassion and fairness. It also means embracing humility in our daily interactions, choosing love over division, and seeking reconciliation where there is conflict. We can remind ourselves that our allegiance is to God's kingdom—where all are welcome—and that we are called to be peacemakers in a world that often prioritizes power and exclusion.

Jesus' message was, and still is, a direct challenge to any form of nationalism that seeks to elevate one nation or people above another. His teachings remind us that our primary allegiance is not to a flag, a political party, or even a nation-state. Our primary allegiance is to God and to the kingdom of God, which transcends all earthly divisions. This is why Christian Nationalism is such a dangerous distortion of the faith—it turns what should be a unifying, global movement into something exclusive and divisive.

By definition, then, the Christian faith is anti-nationalistic. It calls us to look beyond the artificial divisions of nation-states and to see ourselves as part of a larger, global community. It calls us to build a world where justice, compassion, and love reign supreme, not one where power and domination dictate our lives. This is the challenge of following Jesus in today's world. It's not about aligning ourselves with any political movement or nation-state; it's about living out the radical values of the kingdom of God.

In a time when nationalism is on the rise in many parts of the world, it's more important than ever to return to the roots of our faith. The Jesus movement wasn't about building an earthly empire. It was, and still is, about building a community of love and justice that reflects the heart of God. Let's remember that, and let it guide how we live out our faith in the world today.

Peace to you.

+Walt



THE CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION

A HYMN OF CHRISTAIN UNITY- PAGE # 31 IN THE NEW CENTURY HYMNAL

By Muriel Magg

My own appreciation for hymns has increased over the years as I've learned and written about the stories behind them for the Congregate Tidings. Hymns are like mini Bible studies. They're bursts of devotional richness with rhyme and rhythm. Lots of good music will improve our moods, but the great hymns massage my mind with God-prescribed salve, or as I like to call it "hymn therapy."

Samuel J. Stone (1839-1900) was born to Reverend William and Susan Stone in Staffordshire, England. Having worked as a woodworkers apprentice early in his life, Samuel later attended Charter School and Oxford College where he was ordained in 1862. Immediately after ordination, Samuel began serving at various different churches until 1870 when he joined his father's ministries at St. Paul's in Haggerstown, England. Four years later, Samuel followed his father's footsteps and took over for his father as Vicar until 1890. From then until his death in 1900, Samuel served at All Hallows' London Wall poverty-stricken sectors of London, turning it into a safe haven for working girls and women in England. He is sometimes known as "the pastor of the poor." Samuel Stone was inspired to write "The Church's One Foundation" in response to a church controversy nearly half a world away in South Africa, where Bishop John Colenso denounced much of the Bible as fictitious. Bishop Gray moved to discipline Colenso, and the resulting controversy reverberated throughout the Church of England.

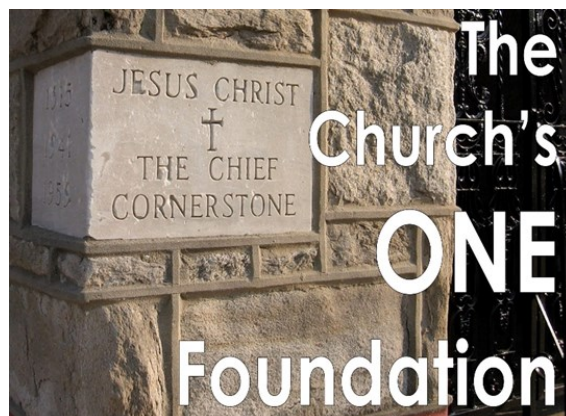
Reverend Stone wrote "The Church's One Foundation" as one of twelve hymns based on the Twelve Articles of the Apostles' Creed. He hoped that these hymns would help people to better comprehend the creed that they often recited but seldom understood. He also hoped that they would support the conservative side of the controversy that was rocking the church. "The Church's One Foundation" was the hymn Samuel Stone wrote for Article 9 of the Creed, which affirms belief in "the holy catholic (universal) church" and "the communion of saints."

The hymn is a favorite of mine, as I'm sure it's a favorite of many of yours. The lyrics are a rare combination of being beautifully poetic, while at the same time conveying deep theological truth. Not only each verse, but each phrase within the verse affirms that no matter what the Church goes through, Christ is working His purpose out in and through it.

In verse 1, we are reminded that Christ is the foundation of the church because He is the one who came and bought it with his blood. In verse 2, we affirm that it is a God that draws us to Himself, from all over the world, and that we are connected one to another in Christ. Verse 3, reminds us that although the Church may go through hard times such as oppression, schisms and heresies, God will rescue His Church from all that would divide it. On and on, through each verse, there is another aspect of the doctrine, history and future of the Church that is examined. At six verses, it's one of the longer songs in our hymnal, but oh how majestic and beautiful it is.

Samuel S. Wesley, the grandson of Methodist hymn writer Charles Wesley, composed the tune "AURELIA," meaning (golden) to accompany Stone's lyrics.

We sing this hymn with all who have gone before us and with Christians around the world, declaring we are all part of the same body, the body of Christ.



Join Us At The Church For
The Brother Sun, Sister Moon Musical

**Wednesday, October 9, 2024
7:00pm**

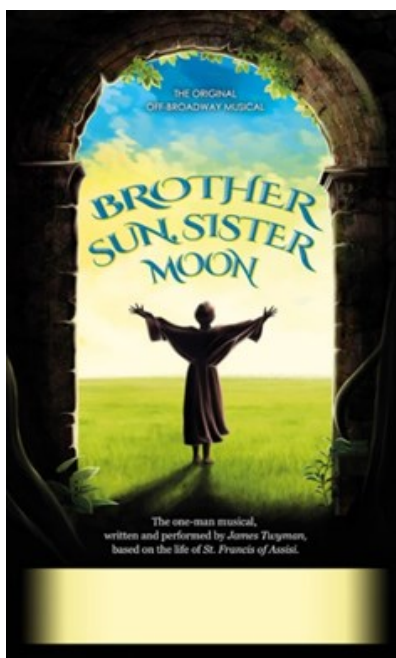
The Brother Sun, Sister Moon Musical is based on the life of Saint Francis of Assisi.

Born into wealth in 1182, Francis felt the emptiness of material pursuits and gradually embraced a life of simplicity, seeing the world through a lens of radical humility and love. Francis became a joyful, compassionate servant of all creation, finding God's presence in the poor, the sick, and even in nature itself. Francis is the embodiment of living with open hands, trusting in divine providence, and continually seeking peace through unity with all of God's creatures.

Francis' embrace of simplicity, care for the poor, and deep connection to nature are especially relevant today as we grapple with environmental crises, economic inequality, and a need for greater connection and compassion. His life reminds us to prioritize humility, peace, and care for all creation in a complex and divided world.

The musical, which debuted Off-Broadway in 2020, is performed by James-Francis Twyman. Twyman is a professed Franciscan brother in the Community of Francis and Clare. He is the NY Times bestselling author of 23 books including *The Moses Code* and *Emissary of Light*. He has recorded more than 18 music albums including the Billboard chart bestseller *I AM Wishes Fulfilled* along with Dr. Wayne Dyer; as well as produced or directed seven feature films. Brother James-Francis founded the interfaith spiritual community Namaste Village. He lives in Ajijic, Mexico.

TICKETS ARE FREE so everyone can come! Please donate if you can. Suggested ticket starting at \$20.



Blessing of the Animals – Celebrate the Feast of St. Francis



Join us on Sunday, October 6, 2024, from 3 to 4 pm for a special Blessing of the Animals in celebration of the Feast of St. Francis. All creatures, great and small, are welcome! Bring your pets—dogs, cats, birds, and all beloved animals—to receive a blessing.

This event honors St. Francis, who shared a profound love for all of creation and saw every living being as a gift from God. Whether your companion is furry, feathered, or scaled, we invite you to this gathering of community and connection with the natural world.

We'll gather behind the church (rain or shine). Feel free to bring photos of pets who cannot travel or those who have passed, so we may honor them as well.

All are welcome, and we look forward to sharing this moment of blessing with you and your cherished companions!

Join Us For Dinner Church!



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

On Tuesday, October 22nd, at 6:00 PM in our Fellowship Hall, we invite you to join us for Dinner Church, a unique worship experience that blends the sacred with the ordinary in a deeply meaningful way.

Dinner 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 potluck meal, and engage in heartfelt conversations, reflective readings, and communal prayers, all within a relaxed, welcoming environment.

This gathering is open to everyone, whether you're a regular church-goer or simply curious about exploring faith in a more intimate and relational setting. Bring a dish to share and 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 Dinner Church and discover a new way to experience worship and community. We look forward to seeing you there!

Church Revitalization Days: A Roadmap to Renewal

The Reverend Dr. Michael S. Piazza
AGILE CHURCH | FOUNDER, CEO



Rev. Dr. Michael S. Piazza
AGILE CHURCH | FOUNDER, CEO

Friday, October 18th from 9am to 4pm
Saturday, October 19th from 9am to Noon

**Here at First Church of Christ, Congregational,
UCC**

It's no secret that attendance and engagement in main-line denominational churches is dropping.

Congregations are aging; churches are closing.

And yet, for nearly fifty percent of the population, there is pervasive loneliness and a deep yearning for spiritual connection.

So, then, how do we leverage this moment?

How do we engage with the people who need you most?

How do we rebuild your church?

That's what you'll discover when you come to our Church Vitality Days.

Sharpen Your Core Mission: We'll help you distill and articulate the essence of your church's purpose.

Elevate Your Worship Experiences: Transform your services into moments of profound impact and spiritual renewal.

Build Community: Foster meaningful connections through small groups and educational classes.

Leverage Technology: Use innovative tools to reach out, engage, and grow your congregation in the digital age.

Walk away with a clear roadmap for renewal.

Agile Church Consulting is dedicated to equipping church leadership teams with innovative solutions to overcome challenges and capitalize on new opportunities, ensuring a sustainable future for progressive churches of all sizes.

The Agile team brings decades of experience, a diverse range of skills and a long track record of success.

Engage. Learn. Transform. Grow!

Join us!

Pastor's Installation Photos



(Courtesy photos by Barbara Sisson)

Never Forget So That...

By Pastor Walt Hampton, J.D., CFC

I had the privilege of speaking at the Valley's 9-11 Memorial Ceremony.

It was Powerful. Poignant. Necessary.

And the arc of the ceremony was beautifully curated by Steve Woodcock.

Steve's reminder of the motto Never Forget was an important one because, as he observed, people do forget. And while many of us who were in Schouler Park for this year's ceremony have a visceral recollection of that morning 23 years ago, there will come a time when no one has a personal connection to that day.

I want to suggest, though, that the phrase Never Forget is, by itself, insufficient.

Certainly we want to remember those who died on that terrible day. And we want to honor those brave humans who ran toward the terror to rescue those in need.

But if we only mark the moment, we run the risk of turning 9-11 into just another sterile page in a high school history book.

So how do we leverage the moment?

The answer is that, as we honor those who lost their lives, we must also honor the future by committing ourselves to peace.

The truth is, that despite the passage of time, our world is more dangerous, more violent, and more divided than it has ever been.

Is that what we want for those who stand in Schouler Park 23 years from now?

The events of September 11th were steeped in ideology, fear, and division.

That hasn't changed. We see it in how nations interact, how leaders speak, and how many of us, in our own lives, are conditioned to believe that might makes right.

But this is a zero-sum game.

To honor the past and to change the future, we must become instruments of peace.

This invites us to see the humanity in each other, to prioritize love over power, and to work for healing where there is brokenness.

Each of us has the capacity to bring peace into the spaces we occupy, whether it's in our families, workplaces, or communities. It starts with small acts—listening when we would rather argue, forgiving when we would rather hold a grudge, and showing kindness where there is hurt.

Staying in curiosity, and out of judgment.

Choosing kindness over meanness.

These may seem like insignificant gestures in the face of a world marred by conflict, but peace begins with small, deliberate actions.

Whether we call it peace, reconciliation, or justice, we all share in the responsibility to build a better world, where love, not hatred, guides our actions.

As we look to the future, we must ask ourselves what kind of world we want to build.

If we want a world marked by peace, it will not come by accident.

It will come because people like you and me make the decision to live differently, to reject the love of power and embrace the power of love. It will come because we choose to be instruments of peace, even when it's hard, even when it costs us something.

Let us Never Forget... so that together we create a better world.

May it be so.

Peace to you.










+Walt





October 2024



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29 Fryeburg Fair 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 	30 12:00am - 1:00pm AA meeting Fryeburg Fair 7:00am Fair Pan Cleaning 9:00am Fryeburg Fair baking 	1 Fryeburg Fair 7:00am Fair Pan Cleaning 9:00am Fryeburg Fair baking 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	2 Fryeburg Fair 7:00am Fair Pan Cleaning 9:00am Fryeburg Fair baking 1:00pm - 3:00pm Pastor's Office Hours	3 Fryeburg Fair 7:00am Fair Pan Cleaning 9:00am Fryeburg Fair baking 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open	4 Fryeburg Fair 7:00am Fair Pan Cleaning 9:00am Fryeburg Fair baking 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	5 Fryeburg Fair 7:00am Fair Pan Cleaning
6 Fryeburg Fair Ends Neighbors in Need Offering 10:00am Communion Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS 3:00pm - 4:00pm Blessing of the Animals 	7 12:00am - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Crafty Hands Workshop 	8 9:30am - 2:00pm WIC 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm Music Team meeting	9 9:00am - 11:00am Essential Non-Food Pantry 1:00pm - 3:00pm Pastor's Office Hours 7:00pm - 9:00pm Brother James Event MUSIC Ministry 	10 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	11 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	12
13 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship	14 12:00am - 1:00pm AA meeting Offices Closed - Indigenous Peoples' Day	15 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 4:00pm Trustees meeting	16 Fellowship 1:00pm - 3:00pm Pastor's Office Hours	17 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	18 9:00am - 4:00pm Rev. Dr. Michael Piazza 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting HOPE renewed 	19 9:00am - 12:00pm Rev. Dr. Michael Piazza HOPE renewed 
20 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 11:30am - 12:30pm Church Council meeting 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS	21 12:00am - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Crafty Hands Workshop	22 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 12:30pm - 2:00pm Clergy of the Eastern Slope Luncheon 6:00pm - 8:30pm Church Dinner CHURCH FAMILY 	23 1:00pm - 3:00pm Pastor's Office Hours	24 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	25 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	26 NH Conference Annual meeting
27 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship	28 12:00am - 1:00pm AA meeting 5:00pm - 6:00pm Trunk or Treat 6:30pm - 8:00pm Crafty Hands Workshop 	29 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 5:00pm Diaconate meeting	30 1:00pm - 3:00pm Pastor's Office Hours	31 12:30pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	1 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	2

LECTIONARIES

OCTOBER 6, 2024

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

World Communion Sunday

Neighbors In Need Offering

Hebrew Bible: Job 1:1, 2:1-10

New Testament: Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

Gospel: Mark 10:2-16

OCTOBER 13, 2024

Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost

Hebrew Bible: Job 23:1-9, 16-17

New Testament: Hebrews 4:12-16

Gospel: Mark 10:17-31

OCTOBER 20, 2025

Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost

Hebrew Bible: Job 38:1-7 (34-41)

New Testament: Hebrews 5:1-10

Gospel: Mark 10:35-45

OCTOBER 27, 2024

Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost

Hebrew Bible: Job 42:1-6, 10-17

New Testament: Hebrews 7:23-28

Gospel: Mark 10:46-52



10-15 Russell and Dortha Seybold

10-16 Peter and Muriel Magg



10-03 Rory Matregrano

10-12 Sally Kratt

10-12 Patricia Bean

10-13 Scot Santos

10-13 Cindy Russell

10-14 Cheryl Furtado

10-15 Tim Psaledakis

10-16 Mark Schiller

10-17 Mary Ellen Shea

10-17 Megan Croce

10-17 Elaine Spratt

10-19 Marcia Smith

10-19 Julia Edwards

10-20 Robert Bechtold

10-21 Sue Davidson

10-22 Eve Walker

10-22 Elaine Paul

10-22 Sean McGrath

10-23 Peter Hyde

10-23 Madeline McGrath

10-24 Matthew Schiller

10-25 Muriel Magg

10-25 Mike James

10-26 Harry Smith

10-28 Joseph Leighton



PRAYER LIST

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

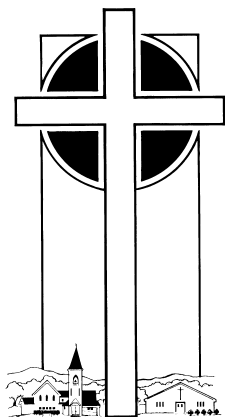
Remember those who mourn, especially the families of **Floyd Corson, Bob Borchert and Lynn Terry, Jennifer Terry's father.**

Remember those in our extended care facilities:
At Merriman House: **Liz George-Hussey; Cynthia and Conrad Briggs and Marilyn Elliott**

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:



(Courtesy photo by Barbara Sisson)

Pictured above is l-r Lee Coffield, Dr. Robert Sisson, Lucy Howland our Blueberry Crispers.

THANK YOU to everyone who volunteered to make our Blueberry Crisp fundraiser happen again this year. It takes our entire faith community and good people in the valley who give of their time for this to be a success. We are most grateful! ❤️🍷❤️

CHURCH & VAUGHAN STAFF

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

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

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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