

**First Church of Christ, Congregational
United Church of Christ**

Holy Vessels

"Stories"

Third Sunday in Lent



March 8, 2026

CCLI #292978, and #20547245

CHURCH ORGANIZED ON AUGUST 18, 1778

Present building erected in North Conway Village 1884

**"No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are
welcome here!"**

GATHER

People gather around Jesus as his reputation becomes known from town to town. As we gather virtually or physically, we too are yearning for presence, for peace, for help.

***Please stand if you are able.**

Prelude

Lighting of the Worship Candles
We invite you to use this time for silent prayer
and reflection as we prepare for worship.

Welcome and Announcements

Threshold to Worship

Leader: We continue our Lenten “season of recovery” as we focus on health as essential to our spiritual lives.

CHOIR

**Vessels, holy and whole
Broken, needing the One
Open, body and soul
Healer, come.**

Leader: Those who collect beach glass often become “archeologists”—seeking out any markings or clues as to the story of the original piece. It often takes much time to bring out the truth behind it. This week we acknowledge the power of truth-telling as a healing property. There are stories that have shaped our lives, leaving us without the ability to see who we truly are in the eyes of God and leaving us without the ability to speak the depth of our stories of struggle. We focus on the importance of recovery of mental health, reclaiming our sense of who we are and being able to proclaim new redemptive stories of divine worth.

CHOIR

**Vessels, holy and whole
Broken, needing the One
Open, body and soul
Healer, come.**

APPROACH

People opened their lives to Jesus. We are drawn to the Healer—opening our hearts with honesty about our lives and finding assurance that offers peace.

Opening Prayer of Confession

One: Let us pray:

All: Centering and Calming Divine Breath of God, You gifted us with amazing minds, capable of so many things. You gave us the ability to think and feel, imbuing us with discernment of thought and emotion. Like our physical bodies, sometimes this aspect of our selves is beleaguered. We struggle under the strain of disappointment, despair, and delusion. Too often we hide this, afraid of what others might think of our difficulties in managing or moving forward, even in the face of devastating circumstances. Too often we perpetuate the stigma of a less-than-perfect state of mind by shaming ourselves and others. Millennia of misunderstanding compounds our fear. We label and belittle, all the while turning the hatred upon ourselves, for no one is immune from troubles of the mind at some point. So many are suffering now, God, weary and distraught, grieving and at the end of their rope.

Help us, Healer. Show us our capacity for compassion. Forgive our attention. Move us to move one step at a time toward greater care for one another.

Silence

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION
**Vessels, holy and whole
Broken, needing the One
Open, body and soul
Healer, come.**

Assurance

Peace

One: I invite you to imagine the warmth that surrounds you extending to those who may be next to you in close proximity. Imagine it extending beyond these walls to the neighborhood...the wider community...the church...and seeing it spread like the rising sun, let it expand to all the world.

Let this be our peace. **Amen.**

***Sharing the Peace of Christ**

One: Peace be with you!

All: And also with you.

BELIEVE

People were fortified by Jesus' words and deeds that revealed care for all—especially those marginalized. We strengthen our belief in the possibility for renewed health and vigor for all.

***Hymn NCH #488**

Be Still My Soul

Message for the Young at Heart

Pastor Sue

A Contemporary Word

“Tell the story of the mountain you climbed.
Your words could become a page in someone else’s survival guide.”

— **Morgan Harper Nichols**

Owning our story and loving ourselves through that
process is the bravest thing that we will ever do.”

— **Brené Brown**

Musical Proclamation

Lenten Meditation

J. Althouse

Jesus Christ, my Savior lived for me and died,
Source of my salvation, yet was crucified.
Peace that knows no measure; this by faith I see.
Love that knows no ending; Jesus died for me.
Lord, O Lord, we renew our commitment these forty nights and days.
And Lord, O Lord, by your grace help us change our sinful ways.

Hear me now, Lord Jesus: I will never stray.
I will never wander. Hear me, as I pray:
Free me now from darkness.
Cleanse me now from sin. Pardon my transgressions.
Make me pure within.
Lord, O Lord, we renew our commitment these forty nights and days.
And Lord, O Lord, by your grace help us change our sinful ways. Amen.

An Ancient Word

Matthew 9:27-33

Message

To Tell the Truth

Pastor Sue

ASK

People who were healed by Jesus were not afraid to ask. And so we come before the Holy One, making our petitions and desires known, trusting the work of the Spirit.

Song of Preparation Make Us Holy, Make Us Whole

CHOIR

**In your love, make us whole.
May we rest in your compassion.
Calm the lost, weary soul
in the warmth of your love.
May your peace fill our hearts.
May we know the love of Jesus.
By your grace, you console.
Make us holy, make us whole.**

Prayers of the People - Joys, Concerns and Candle-lighting

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

**In your love, make us whole.
May we rest in your compassion.
Calm the lost, weary soul
in the warmth of your love.
May your peace fill our hearts.
May we know the love of Jesus.
By your grace, you console.
Make us holy, make us whole.**

Pastoral Prayer

Offering Invitation

Doxology

Old Hundredth Tune

**Praise God throughout these 40 days,
Praise Christ, our Lord, whom God did raise,
And praise the Spirit who imparts
God's love in Christ to faithful hearts.**

Prayer of Gratitude

KNOW

The parting words Jesus' gave to those he healed were often as much balm as the healing act itself. We hear words of encouragement from the One who makes beauty from brokenness.

Communion Ritual

One: Our God is with you!

All: And also with you!

One: Lift up your hearts

All: We lift them up to our God.

One: Let us give thanks to our Sovereign God

All: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

One: It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you,And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**All: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

One: Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ, Holy Vessel of Divine Presence on earth.....And so, in remembrance of the healing, life-transforming acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

All: Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

One: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine.....Through your Son Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit in your holy church, all honor and glory is yours, Healing God, now and forever.

Amen.

Prayer of Jesus – The Lord’s Prayer (Sung)

One: Let us pray together

All: Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Distribution of the elements

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Ritual Action for the Week

RESPOND

Scriptural accounts of healing often end with responses from the “crowd” of witnesses. How will we proceed into the brokenness of this world and respond as the Body of Christ?

***Hymn** NCH #553

There Is a Balm in Gilead

Commission

Leader: Each week we look at the reaction of the crowd in the healing story. This week the crowd was amazed and cried out that nothing like it had ever been seen before. How interesting that the crowd is “seeing” something for the first time, just like the blind man is brought to sight! Could it be that this is as important

to the story as the ones who received physical healing? How could we open our eyes, figuratively, in new ways? What do we need to envision anew?

And so in our communal discerning about how this church community could become a “health hub” through our ministry and mission, let us put our minds to imagining how we could shine a positive light on the work of mental health. The needs are so urgent, especially now. Throughout this time, I invite you to explore with us the possibilities for a new or renewed commitment to a contribution we can make at First Church to our larger community’s effort to recover from this past year.

Blessing

Threshold Into the World

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

**Vessels, holy and whole
Broken, needing the One
Open, body and soul
Healer, come.**

Postlude

Friendship

Michael Schütz

Greeter: Mary Lou Waite

Liturgist: Helen Goss

Ushers: Jim Umberger and Jay Donabedian

Pastor: Sue Davidson

Welcome to First Church of Christ! If you are visiting with us today, please note that there are two fire exits at the rear of the sanctuary and one at the back of the church through the kitchen. There are two unisex bathrooms; one downstairs off the front entrance and one off the kitchen at the rear of the building.

The doors to the church are locked at 10:10am on Sundays for everyone's safety. One of the doors in the back of the sanctuary is kept open for the Ushers to keep an eye out for any latecomers. Please knock on the glass if you need to get their attention.

Evelyn Porter is designated as The Coordinator of the Diaconates' Ministry of Greeting. If you would like her to send a card from the church to someone who is ill, grieving, celebrating or who just needs a "pick-me-up" note. Please call her at (603) 356-2881 or send her an email at hambru35@yahoo.com.

Mission Corner:

- **The Noisy Offering for March/April** will go to **Conway Peer Supports** to help with the dog park planned in North Conway.
- **The 1st Quarter Mission Collection** is to support the **Gibson Center for Senior Services**. (This changed from going to the Way Station for their Cold Weather Emergency Shelter Program as a large donation of \$10K was made by Mission to this program in January.)
- **The Food Pantry welcomes non-perishable food and monetary gifts are most appreciated as they can be stretched further.** Pantry hours are shown in our *Week of Activities*. Checks can be made payable to: *Vaughan Community Service, Inc.* and placed in the collection plate.

Week of Activities:

Today: **Third Sunday of Lent-Communion Sunday**

Monday AA Noon-1pm;
Scouts of America Troop 150 and Pack 150 6:30-8:00pm

Tuesday: Food Pantry 11:30am-1:45

Wednesday: Senior Non-Food Pantry 9-11am

Thursday: Food Pantry Open 12:00-2:15pm;
Choir Rehearsal 3-4pm;
Bell Choir 4-5pm

Friday: AA Noon-1pm

Sunday: **Fourth Sunday of Lent;**
One Great Hour of Sharing Offering;
Revolving Closet - Teens 2-5pm

Our **March Newsletter is chock full of good stuff and important dates!**

You'll find it in your mail and by going online to our website at:

<https://firstchurchnc.com/Newsletters/March2026.pdf>

Church Address and Information

First Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC
2521 White Mountain Highway
PO Box 401
North Conway, NH 03860

Pianist/Organist: Patrick Speckamp

Associate Organist: Muriel Magg

Chancel Choir/Handbell Director: Anne Polak

Church Administrator/Bookkeeper: Denise Leighton

Vaughan Administrator: Jennifer Perkins

Vaughan Learning Center Director: Heather Ouellette

Vaughan Bookkeeper: Denise Leighton

Church Sexton: Mark Schiller

Church Phone: 603-356-2324

Church Fax number: 603-356-2106

Vaughan Food Pantry: 603-602-1801

Vaughan Learning Center: 603-356-5213

Church Office Email: churchoffice@firstchurchnc.com

Church Website: www.firstchurchnc.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/firstchurchncnh

Thank you for worshipping with us today!



To make giving even easier for those who don't carry cash or use checks, we've started using QR Code, in the bulletin. Just scan the code with your phone like you would in a restaurant!