

The Congregate Tidings

Volume 35 Issue 1

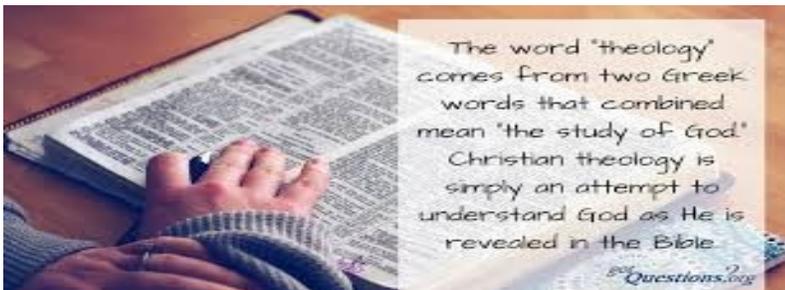
January 2021

Rev. John's Musings

This year, think first of someone else. Take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of the earth. Write a love letter. Share some treasure. Gladden the heart of a child. Welcome a stranger. Thank God for what you are and what you have, whether it be great or small. Mend a quarrel. Give a soft answer. Seek out a forgotten friend. Dismiss suspicion, and replace it with trust. Keep a promise. Find the time. Forego a grudge. Forgive an enemy. Apologize if you were wrong. Listen. Try to understand. Examine your demands on others. Appreciate. Be kind. Be gentle. Laugh a little. Laugh a little more. Deserve confidence. Express your gratitude to others. Pray for peace. Go to church. Love completely. Speak your love. Speak it again. Speak it once again.

These are but inklings of a vast category, a mere scratching of the surface. They are simple things; you have heard them all before; but their influence has never been measured.

This year, they can change your life.



We will Continue to gather on Wednesday Evenings at 7pm via Zoom starting January 6 .We will talk about the Hidden Histories, what we believe, discussion of what is unique about the United Church of Christ.

When we gather on January 6 - Answer the questions 'How Many denominations make up the UCC and name them. We will tackle what is our polity (church government) ask yourself how do you think we govern ourselves? , we will investigate hidden histories and ask the question: do we as a UCC have nuns? We will trace our roots back to the Reformation. We will look at our unique understanding of baptism, Communion. We will look at our unveiling of ordained ministry and lay ministry. Then the most complex and complicated, our theology. I personally love this kind of discussion, think of us all sitting around a warm fire, engaging in a wonderful understanding of who we are and what we believe.



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DEACON'S CORNER—HAPPY 2021!!!

Notes from the Diaconate: By Helen Goss, Member

While we continue to be socially distanced, I will try and bring you up to date on the doings of your Diaconate that continues to meet monthly or more depending on the need.

First off, I hope this finds you well and not one of the rising statistics we see daily on the news as we push through this pandemic. Good news is that the vaccine is on its way and though we will have to wait our turn, I encourage you to be vaccinated when it is made available to you. We can turn this tide if we work for the benefit of all. *Remember*, once you are vaccinated you need to take the same precautions of masking up, washing your hands, and staying socially distanced for the safety of all.

We have been live streaming and recording the Sunday services via the weekly Zoom link and Facebook. The technology continues to be a challenge but everyone is trying their very best to provide us with a weekly service. **Peter Magg** deserves a boatload of thanks for the hours of work he has put in along with **Pastor John** trying to make the present systems work. We need upgrades to our technology to make things better, so consider this when making your pledge to the church.

Virtual Coffee Hour has moved to 1:00PM to allow those essential for live streaming the church service to get home and participate. Pastor John is now sending separate links for Worship and Coffee Hour so there should be less confusion and we hope to see more participants.

Christmas Eve Services will be offered online and Pastor John has posted those times and dates and will be sending out the links. There will be (3) services offered on Christmas Eve. Though we will not physically be with each other, with the help of technology we can be together. So keep spreading those virtual hugs!!!

Pastor John's proposed **Behavior Covenant** passed at Church Council on November 16th. We have been working with Pastor John on this and you will all get to see it shortly as it will be presented and voted on by the congregation at our upcoming Annual Meeting in February/2021.

Our *Field of Prayers* ribbon cross lamentation in remembrance of those we have lost in NH due to COVID-19 has been put away for the winter, stopping at 504 deaths. I know of at least one person who stopped daily to pray. As the seasons change and the vaccine becomes available, we will assess how we move forward with this lament.

Mark Schiller has agreed to be our new Church Sexton, which is great news! When we can gather again with Mark's help we know we will be in safe surroundings. And we are most excited to share that **Chris Strout** will be joining our ranks on the Diaconate! So if there are any others out there that would like to join this awesome Diaconate Team, just reach out to any Diaconate member. They would be happy to take your call.

(Ken Schiller, Lee Coffield, Muriel Magg, Julie James, Linda Derse, Helen Goss, & Chris Strout)

HOW BRIGHTLY BEAMS THE MORNING STAR! A HYMN IN A TIME OF A PANDEMIC

By Muriel Magg

Many Christians around the world annually celebrate Epiphany on January 6, when traditional Christmas celebrations end and when the visit of the Wise Men and Jesus's Baptism are remembered.

Like everybody in the world our lives have been affected by the COVID-19 crisis in so many different ways as well-established routines and activities have been brought to an abrupt stop. The present disruption to our lives is unprecedented, as we are constantly reminded, but we are not the first generation to be affected by a pandemic or plague and the upheavals they bring. Such things have been happening for as long as history has been written.

During this crisis I've been wondering what examples can be found in the rich heritage of our hymnody to show how hymn-writers have responded to situations similar to the one in which we currently find ourselves.

One rather unlikely example of a hymn written in response to a pandemic is "How Brightly Beams the Morning Star!" a translation of a German chorale written by the Lutheran pastor, poet and hymn writer Philipp Nicolai (1556-1608).

Born in Germany, the son of a Lutheran pastor, Nicolai studied theology, and became a pastor himself who preached with great power and effectiveness. It was a time of religious wars in Europe and Nicolai faced a number of challenges in his life, including religious persecution. Several times he had to flee or go into hiding and minister to his congregations secretly in house meetings.

In 1597, a plague raged throughout Westphalia (a region of western Germany). Thousands of people died and few escaped without the loss of one or more of their loved ones. The plague took over 1300 of Pastor Nicolai's parishioners within a six month period, 170 in one week. After seeing thirty graves dug in one day, Philipp felt weary and downcast. He lifted up his heart to God, and found comfort in his sorrow. He forgot his cares and was driven with the inspiration to write a series of meditations which he called "The Joyful Mirror of Eternal Life", and to this he attached a hymn which has become world-famous. He wrote to comfort his community in what must have been desperate and confusing times. Out of this tragedy however, sprang one of the greatest hymns, "How Brightly Beams the Morning Star" composed by Nicolai in just three hours. Hard to believe! Nicolai wrote that he wished his chorale to be a comfort to other people who might come to be attacked by a contagious or infectious epidemic disease.

Nicolai composed both the text and the tune for "How Brightly Beams the Morning Star" based on Psalm 45, but the arrangements we know are due to J. S. Bach. Many translations in various languages have been made and altered since the first writing which vary considerably, explaining why there are so many versions of the hymn around. As early as 1610, Nicolai's hymn appeared in the hymnal of Sweden, where it was used during the Christmas season. J.S. Bach apparently had a high regard for the tune, for he used it as a basic theme in one of his greatest organ preludes and included it in one of his cantatas.

"How Brightly Beams the Morning Star" (page 158 in the New Century Hymnal) is sung to the tune (Wie Schön Leuchtet, or Frankfort) and can be sung for Advent, for Christmas, for Epiphany, and as a general hymn of praise.

This old hymn points to Jesus Christ, sent by God, as our Comforter and Guide from earth to heaven, and reminds us of God's presence even in our times of trouble.

**MAY THE NEW YEAR BRING NEW LIGHT AND
NEW HOPE TO ALL**



“The View from My Window”
Jennifer Perkins – Vaughan Administrator

“Here, I hope this helps.”

It was a cold and windy November Saturday and another car pulled up to receive their Thanksgiving basket. An older woman stepped forward to get her basket when a young boy, maybe all of 8 years old, bound out of the vehicle to help his grandmother with the basket. After placing all of the items in the car which completed her basket, this tall, thin boy wearing thread bare fatigues, reached into his front pants pocket and pulled something out which he handed to Marge. With pride in his stature, he told Marge, “here, I hope this helps.” and he handed her 11 cents. With pride in voice, he held his head up high and thanked us for the Thanksgiving basket.

In that moment, the 11 cents may well have been \$100.00 to that child for he knew he was doing all he could to make a difference in our world. What will 11 cents buy? – This is my challenge to all of us. I will start with a bowl of oatmeal.

Vaughan is doing something different this year due to the Pandemic, we are giving \$25.00 gift cards instead of Christmas Baskets. I am unable to secure the 50 hams, 50 pies, 50 bags of frozen peas, 50 bags of carrots, potatoes and onions due to closures of packing plants across the United States. All will be well again, or at least better, I pray, in 2021.

The Clothing Depot is open to the public on Saturdays from 9-12. As winter is approaching, so too are the bitter cold temperatures. The opening is just in time!

Wishing you all a healthy New Year!

Warmly,
Jennifer Perkins
Vaughan Administrator

Inspiration



"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." ...I will have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

Martin Luther King, Jr.

January 15, 1929 - April 4, 1968 (age 39)



Vaughan Learning Center has been very busy. We are almost at capacity with a few spaces left in each classroom. We featured a giving tree where classrooms had wish list items on it for parents to purchase. We receive many great items. Renovations are complete and our new space is absolutely amazing. We will be looking for raffle prizes for a calendar raffle we will be having in February, If you have anything to donate or know anyone who does please contact Heather @ 603-356-5213 or email her Heather@VaughanNH.com. If you are looking to purchase a calendar ticket please let Heather know. Tickets will be \$10 each. The more you buy the more chances to win!!!

Due to COVID increases, Pastor John can meet you via Zoom to connect as a Pastoral Call.

Please take caution— Someone is using Pastor John's name under an alias email and wanting money. Please know Pastor John will never want money and please DO NOT answer those emails.



Did you know the church has a wish list? We need a new sound system/projection equipment. Would you like to cover this and make a wish come true? We discovered our sound system

**is weak and pops when we have been recording live streaming. There are numerous other items we would like to tackle. We are certain you noticed some projects. Would you like to have the rights of your name to any of these potential projects? Please talk to a trustee .
THANK YOU !! May all your wishes come true.....**

Church Covenant

Introduction: Why a Church Covenant? It is part of our congregational history. Our ancestors came across the Atlantic Ocean to establish the Mayflower Covenant with God. The word "Covenant" is established in the scriptures. A Covenant is a promise to God, our faith community, and governing structure.

We recognize that we are a diverse group of believers holding differing viewpoints. We are, however, united and uniting in our belief we are to love God, one another, and ourselves.

I. Our Shared purpose is a **Vision Statement** which needs to be made up of at least seven words but can go to twelve. (Our current Vision Statement is really a Mission Statement.)

II.

A. This Covenant is our promise to God to seek God's help, work in our church and listen to God's discernment. This is not an easy task.

B. This Covenant aims to use a positive approach to accomplish the following:

- aa.** Trusting one another
- bb.** Engage in unfiltered conflict around ideas
- cc.** Commit to decisions and plans of action.
- dd.** Focus on the achievement of collective results

Using discipline and persistence through scripture in the spirit of love, trust, and truth **we will -**

III.

A. Demonstrate our leadership to treat each other with respect, using no foul language, no name calling, or labeling of others during meeting discussions or in conversations following meetings;

B. All communications are for an honest exchange and promote healthy functions of teamwork;

C. Promise not to ask questions or make statements that will intimidate, judge or condemn others. We seek to avoid broad generalizations;

D. If there are any serious concerns in the life of the church, they must be typed, signed in writing and given to the appropriate person(s) of a board or committee for validity and accountability;

E. We strive to honor, respect, care for each other in honest debate. It is acceptable to disagree openly in meetings, expressing as clearly and honestly as possible all points of view. We seek to honor all viewpoints.

IV. The art of any meeting and conversation is to Listen, Listen. (Proverbs 18:13) (James 1:9) We will listen what Jesus is telling us to do. That is to say, **we will-**

A. Not make assumptions of motivations or experiences of others;

B. We will seek clarification if needed;

C. We will not try to formulate what we want to say while someone else is speaking;

D. Be open to learning all perspectives; (Romans 12:4-5)

E. Emails, phone calls, etc. between church members should be responded in a timely manner.

V.

A. We promise to support the final decisions of Church Council or other official church meetings, whether it reflects our view or not. (Philippians 2:1-2) If one wishes to change the final decision, work for that change in ways that are consistent with the guidelines in this Church Covenant;

B. We promise to see and discover what is best for our church as a whole, not what might be best for us or for some small group in the church;

C. We promise to seek and stay in community with one another, understanding that discussion may be vigorous or intense at times. We will be ready to forgive and be forgiven;

D. All disagreements will be included in our prayers, bnot praying for triumph for our viewpoints but always seeking God's Grace to listen attentively, and be open to the vision God holds for us all;

E. We promise to focus on the positive and not on the negative. "Whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." (Philippians 4:8)

Vision Statement

The best vision statements are inspirational, clear, memorable, and concise.

Normally we would do this process via in person meeting but with COVID, we have to resort to this format. Hospitality and ONA has started the process for us. Please look at these verbs.

(list the verbs)

Select 9 of these verbs that mean a great deal to you. Write them down.

Then out of the 9 , select 3 and form a vision statement in your understanding of church and what God is speaking to you.

Please send your selection to Pastor John with your name on it to (pastorfirstchurchnc@gmail.com).

We will compile the highest ratio of verbs in common and reveal a proposed statement in the February Tidings and our Annual Meeting. Your thoughts and participation is critical in this process and we value your input and your voice to be heard!!

Ability	Calm	Contribution	Discovery	Fashion
Abundance	Camaraderie	Control	Diversity	Fearless
Acceptance	Capability	Conviction	Dreaming	Fineness
Achievement	Care	Conviviality	Drive	Fitness
Adaptability	Careful	Coolness	Duty	Flexibility
Adventure	Certainty	Cooperation	Dynamism	Flow
Affection	Challenge	Correct	Eager	Fluid
Affluence	Charity	Courage	Economy	Focus
Alertness	Charm	Courtesy	Education	Fortitude
Ambition	Chastity	Creativity	Effective	Frankness
Anticipation	Cheerful	Cunning	Efficiency	Freedom
Appreciation	Clarity	Curiosity	Elation	Friendly
Approachability	Classy	Daring	Elegance	Fun
Artfulness	Clean	Decisive	Empathy	Gallant
Assertiveness	Close	Deference	Encourage	Generosity
Assurance	Cognizance	Delight	Endurance	Genuine
Attentive	Comfort	Dependability	Energy	Giving
Availability	Commitment	Depth	Enjoy	Grace
Aware	Compassion	Desire	Evolve	Grateful
Awe	Competence	Determination	Excellence	Gratitude
Balance	Completion	Devotion	Excitement	Growth
Beauty	Composure	Devout	Expediency	Guidance
Being	Concentration	Dexterity	Experience	Happiness
Belonging	Confidence	Dignity	Expertise	Harmony
Benevolence	Conformity	Diligence	Expressive	Health
Blissful	Connection	Diplomacy	Extravagance	Heart
Bold	Conscious	Direction	Extroversion	Helpful
Bravery	Consistency	Direct	Exuberance	Holy
Brilliance	Contentment	Discernment	Fair	Honesty
Buoyancy	Continuity	Discipline	Faith	Honor

- | | | | | | |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|------------------|----------------|------------|
| Hopeful | Logic | Philanthropy | Reflect | Solidarity | Useful |
| Hospitality | Longevity | Piety | Relax | Solitude | Utility |
| Humility | Loyal | Playful | Reliable | Sophistication | Valor |
| Humor | Majesty | Pleasant | Resilience | Sound | Variety |
| Imagination | Mastery | Pleasure | Resolution | Spirit | Victory |
| Impact | Mature | Plentiful | Resolve | Spiritual | Vigor |
| Impartiality | Meek | Poise | Resourceful | Spontaneity | Virtue |
| Impeccability | Mellow | Popular | Respect | Stability | Vision |
| Independence | Mindful | Potency | Restful | Stillness | Vitality |
| Ingenuity | Moderation | Practical | Restraint | Strength | Vivacity |
| Inquisitive | Modest | Pragmatism | Reverence | Structure | Warm |
| Insightful | Motivation | Precision | Rich | Success | Watchful |
| Instinctive | Mysterious | Prepared | Sacred | Superb | Wholesome |
| Integrity | Neat | Presence | Sacrifice | Support | Willing |
| Intelligence | Obedience | Privacy | Saintliness | Surprise | Wisdom |
| Intensity | Open-minded | Proactive | Satisfaction | Sympathy | Wonder |
| Intrepid | Openness | Professional | Security | Tactful | Worthiness |
| Intuition | Optimism | Proficiency | Self-control | Teamwork | Zeal |
| Intuitive | Opulence | Prosper | Selfless | Temperance | Zest |
| Inventive | Order | Prudence | Self-realization | Thankful | Zing |
| Joy | Organization | Punctual | Self-reliance | Thorough | |
| Judiciousness | Original | Pure | Sensitivity | Thoughtful | |
| Justice | Outlandish | Qualification | Sensuality | Timeliness | |
| Keen | Outrageous | Quick | Serenity | Tranquility | |
| Kind | Passion | Quiet | Service | Transcendence | |
| Knowledge | Peaceful | Readiness | Share | Trust | |
| Leadership | Perceptive | Realism | Significance | Trustworthy | |
| Learning | Perfection | Reason | Silence | Truth | |
| Liberation | Perseverance | Recognize | Simplicity | Understanding | |
| Liberty | Persistence | Recreation | Sincerity | Unique | |
| Lively | Persuasive | Refine | Skillful | Unity | |



Epiphany Blessings and Happy New Year to Family and Friends from the Staff of First Church.

Floyd, Anne, Pastor John, Mark and Bonnie

EPIPHANY

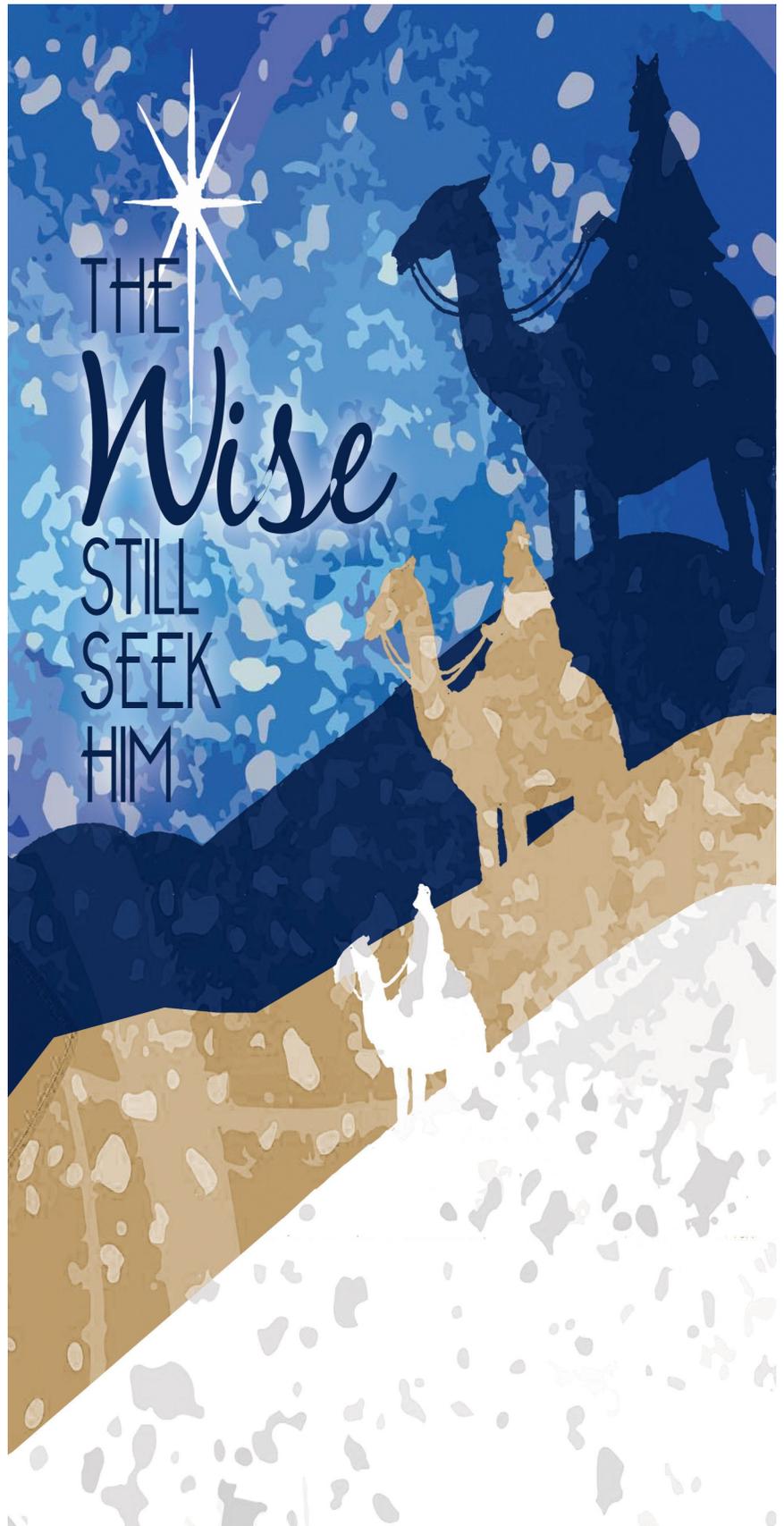


Notice to all Committee Members

Please submit your annual report for your committee to Bonnie not later than December 31st. You can email them to her at churchoffice@firstchurchnc.com. If you have any questions, please ask!

More words to consider

Accomplish	Entertain
Demonstrate	Measure
Identify	Command
Acquire	Enthuse
Devise	Mediate
Illuminate	Communicate
Adopt	Evaluate
Direct	Model
Implement	Compel
Advance	Excite
Discover	Mold
Improve	Compete
Affect	Explore
Discuss	Motivate
Improvise	Compliment
Affirm	Extend
Distribute	Negotiate
Inspire	Compose
Alleviate	Facilitate
Draft	Nurture
Integrate	Confirm
Amplify	Forgive
Dream	Organize
Involve	Connect
Ascend	Foster
Educate	Participate
Know	Consider
Believe	Franchise
Embrace	Pass
Launch	Construct
Bestow	Further
Encourage	Perform
Lead	Continue
Brighten	Generate
Endow	Play
Light	Council
Build	Give
Engage	Possess
Live	Create
Cause	Grant
Enhance	Practice
Make	Recognize
Choose	Acknowledge
Enlighten	Affirm
Manifest	Encourage
Claim	Connect
Enlist	Care
Master	Empower
Collect	Nurture
Enliven	Do
Mature	
Combine	
Love	
Work	



OPEN AND AFFIRMING TEAM

Notes from the ONA: By Helen Goss, Chair

The ONA Team is back on track having had three enlightening meetings with Pastor John since October. We meet the first Monday of each month and WELCOME anyone who wants to join us! Our meeting in October was safely staged “in person,” but since we have met via Zoom at 7PM.

The Team all participated in bringing Pastor John up to speed on where we are at and what had taken place during Pastor Ruth’s interim time with us. After that Pastor asked that we let go of what was negative from our past gatherings, build on what we had learned, and with his guidance work with renewed energy to get to the vote by First Church to be an open and affirming congregation. There is much work to be done to try and educate everyone in what this means. COVID has set us back again once we successfully brought on a settled pastor, but we are a resilient group and determined to share with all of you so that everyone can make an educated vote.

Pastor John has proposed a **Behavioral Covenant** which will be important for all our church meetings, but especially for ONA as all our listening skills will be tested. We want to hear your concerns and questions about becoming an open and affirming church as much as we want you to hear why we feel it is so important for the growth and future of First Church. This must be done with respect and civility by all as we believe we can find common ground, and where we struggle, together we can identify where the problem lies. We are working during this time of “no gathering” as to how best to accomplish a meeting, even if by Zoom, to try and move the educational/informative dial.

Pastor John has also asked that First Church develop a true **Vision Statement** in 12 words or less for First Church. This is a work in progress for the entire congregation in the first quarter of 2021, but I’m proud to say that the ONA Team has made a first attempt. I offer to you this Vision Statement to consider:

A community of faith learning to share God’s unconditional love.

We are talking with Pastor Emily at the First Congregational Church, UCC, in Bridgton, ME as they have been an open and affirming church for many years with a large congregation and very successful youth program. She is most willing to help us both with matters of inclusion and connect us with their Youth Director, Sandy, who by what I read weekly is a gem!

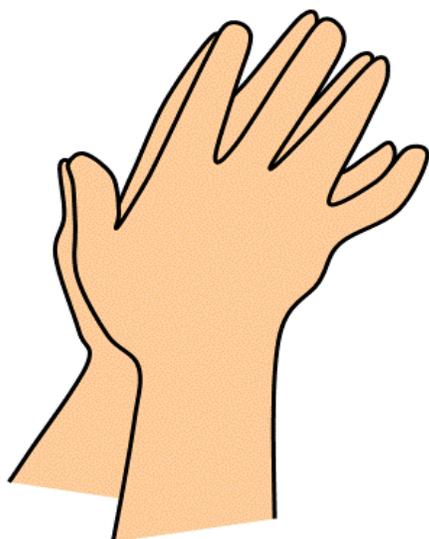
There is much hope for 2021 as we await the administering of the vaccine and get back to in-person church by spring. We look forward to future gatherings with you and meaningful discussions on your concerns to include the Bible passages that we discuss at our monthly meetings. Remember, anyone is welcome to join in our regular meeting discussions. Our next meeting is **January 11th at 7PM** due to the New Year’s holiday, via Zoom. If you need the link, just let me know!

We look forward to a year of kindness where we are the example for others to follow.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE

Twelve Disciples Word Search

Z T F V K G S E Q N E N H H P
 T M I R A C L E S R F E E C F
 T E A Y V P G Y F A I M A A L
 V S A E I A X B R E L R L E T
 W W V C L V J X I L I E A R M
 Y O S I H R W N E S O H C P C
 L I L B S I M O N E T S F Y R
 D E F L O Z N Z D S Z I M H O
 E K G V O A B G S C T F E L W
 S E M A J F T T W E L V E J D



BOAT
 CHOSEN
 CROWD
 DISCIPLE
 FISHERMEN
 FOLLOW
 FRIENDS
 GALILEE
 HEAL
 JAMES

LEARN
 LEFT
 LIFE
 LOVE
 MIRACLES
 NETS
 PREACH
 SIMON
 TEACHING
 TWELVE



SCRIPTURES AND SERMONS FOCUS FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY

<i>January 3</i>	<i>John 1-18</i>	<i>“God’s Creativity”</i>
<i>January 10</i>	<i>Mark 1:4-11</i>	<i>“The Spirit Blows Where it will”</i>
<i>January 17</i>	<i>I Samuel 3:1-20; John 1:43-51</i>	<i>“You Matter”</i>
<i>January 24</i>	<i>Mark 1:14-20</i>	<i>“Are We the Establishment?”</i>
<i>January 31</i>	<i>Mark 1:21-28</i>	<i>“Tend to your Own Garden”</i>

Please let us know if you are having surgery, and updates in your emails, and physical addresses! It reduces stress on our Diaconate, Secretary and Pastor! Thanks! Church Office
www.pastorfirstchurchnc@gmail.com

Pastor John will be offering a weekly inspirational uplifting message on Facebook, website and emails to help you get thru this COVID and winter months.



HUMOR



A father was at the beach with his children when the four-year-old son ran up to him, grabbed his hand, and led him to the shore where a seagull lay dead in the sand. “Daddy, what happened to him?” the son asked. “He died and went to Heaven,” the Dad replied. The boy thought a moment and then said, “Did God throw him back down?”



- 11 Megan Hogue
- 12 Robert Smith
- 16 Helen Goss
- 16 Carol Fillman
- 10 Joan Santos
- 10 Tyler James
- 10 Karen Cameron
- 11 Dick Stoneman
- 13 Carol Westervelt
- 15 Jennifer Perkins
- 15 Rebecca Schiller
- 15 Richard Goss III
- 19 Daniel Jones
- 20 Jamie Tuttle
- 22 Abigail McGrath
- 24 Mariah Healy
- 25 Conrad Briggs
- 25 Jackson Smith
- 27 Robert Seaman
- 29 Mary Gaudette
- 29 Kelly Drew
- 31 Lucy Howland

11 Brett & Cindy Russell

If anyone has any information to help us update our birthday and anniversary lists, please contact the church office at 603-356-2324. Thank you.



Let us remember those who are not able to be out and about due to physical limitations or fragile immune systems.

Those with ongoing health concerns include **Janet Earnshaw, Audrey Vorperian, Arthur DeRosa, Don Waite, Linda Derse and Joan Santos**. We are continuing to pray for **June Waltz and Jed Handspicker** as they continue to heal.

Agnes Birch, Liz George-Hussey, Cynthia Briggs, and Marilyn Elliot are at Merriman House, 3073 White Mountain Hwy, North Conway, 03860. **Peg Chisholm** is at Mountain View Nursing Home, 93 Water Village Rd., Ossipee, 03864. You can send cards to **Lynn Runne** at Bella Point, 70 Fairview Dr., Fryeburg, ME 04037.

Please contact **Bonnie Tryder** or **Pastor John** in the church office with prayer concerns for the next month's issue of The Congregate Tidings. You are welcome to ask for church greeting cards to be sent for celebrations, illness/recovery, grief, and general "thinking of you"/"pick me up" notes by contacting **Evelyn Porter**, the Coordinator of the Diaconate's Ministry of Greeting. Call her at home, (603) 496-2314, or by e-mail at hambro35@yahoo.com.

Please remember to send your pledges to the attention of Dan Jones, First Church of Christ Congregational, PO Box 401, North Conway, NH 03860-0401

Remember your First Quarter Missions contribution

Daily Devotional — *contributed by Helen W. Goss*

Have you ever wrestled with the meaning of a word? Well, I have and that word is *Grace*. Just last week I was having a sidebar discussion with Pastor John about this word when we were at Bible study. During my years of teaching Sunday School I was asked by young and old alike to define this word. If you believe like I do in divine intervention, the Holy Spirit was at work for me yesterday with this *UCC Stillspeaking Daily Devotional*. It touched my heart and so I am choosing to share it with you as it is the purest definition of *Grace* that I have found.

Grace

And all people will see God's salvation. - Luke 3:6 (NIV)

When I was 10 or 11, I had a phone fight with one of my best friends. I argued it was a sin to be gay, and she said it wasn't.

When she asked why I believed being gay was wrong, I paused and didn't have an immediate answer. I mumbled something about how I was pretty sure it said so in the Bible. I also said another friend's grandfather was a pastor, and if he said being gay was a sin, it had to be.

It wasn't my finest moment. I was being rigid, unreasonable, and even brought another friend into the debate to reinforce my side.

I think of this memory often. It was my first theological debate, and thankfully, I lost. That conversation was the gentle nudge I needed to think beyond what I thought I knew. It was my first key to a world where queer people are beloved children of God.

I now identify as queer and am partnered with a woman. Without that early moral clarity from my friend, I wouldn't be who I am today – fearlessly loving myself and knowing God fearlessly loves me too.

My friend could have written me off that day and would have had every right to. But I'm so blessed she didn't. I'm unsure who I would be if she had only seen me for who I was and not for who I could be.

It's no surprise my friend's name is Grace. And because she embodied her name so perfectly, I learned what a precious gift grace is.

Prayer

I once was lost. Thanks for sending Grace to find me.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Marchaé Grair is a spiritual director, facilitator, and the Communications Director at Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism.

May this open all our hearts to a world of possibilities in this coming year.

Members & Friends Directory Changes

New Addresses:

Lucy Howland
PO Box 142
Conway, NH 03818-0142

Elizabeth Howland
144 Columbia Ave
Cranston, RI 02905

Telephone Number changes:

Susanne Lowd:
Landline 603-447-5324 Disconnected
Cell 603-662-4701 Active

Email Addresses:

Julia & Daniel Edwards:
Julia.handspicker@gmail.com
Dsedwardsart@gmail.com

Susanne Lowd:
slowd1944@gmail.com

Dot Seybold
dorthea1955@icloud.com



The Congregate Tidings Newsletter Update:

This is the final Congregate Tidings Newsletter that will be mailed to your home. Going forward, all newsletters will be available on our website at www.firstchurchnc.com. If you do not have access to the internet, we will be happy to mail one out to you. Please call the Church Office at 603-356-2324 and let Bonnie know.



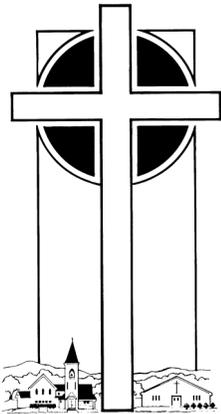
Virtual Coffee Hour now 1pm- Zoom link will be sent to personal email accounts each week.

WE'RE ON THE WEB
firstchurchnc.com

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



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



TO:

FIRST CHURCH AND VAUGHAN STAFF

Pastor: Rev. John Hogue

Licensed Pastor: Gerry Tilton

Organist: Floyd W. Corson

Associate Organist: Muriel Magg

Chancel Choir and Handbell Choir Director:

Anne W. Polak

Administrative Assistant/Bookkeeper: Bonnie Tryder

Vaughan Administrator: Jennifer Perkins

Vaughan Learning Center Director:

Heather Ouellette

Vaughan Bookkeeper: Denise Leighton

Sexton: Mark Schiller

Sunday Worship Service/Sunday School
10 A.M.

Church Office and Vaughan Office (603)356-2324

E-mail address:

churchoffice@firstchurchnc.com

FAX Line number is: 356-7104 (24 hrs. a day)

Www.firstchurchnc.com

Pastor's e-mail: pastorfirstchurchnc@gmail.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/firstchurchncnh

