

# Steeple Minute

First Congregational Church of Littleton  
189 Main Street, Littleton, NH 03561

March 1, 2023

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Issue 3

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Find us on Facebook @FirstCongregationalChurchOfLittletonNh

Dear Friends at First Congregational,

At the Annual Meeting a few weeks ago, the Church Council shared a statement included in this newsletter on what they believed about this time in the life of the church, the questions that they wondered on, and the ways that they need all of us to be part of the discoveries of this season.

I was moved that throughout their statement they returned to the need for listening, and specifically listening for God's plan or dream for the church. I was struck by what an essential and beautiful reminder this is, and what a call for who the church can be at our best – a place where we can practice deep listening for the Spirit's call as we listen to and with one another.

We all could share stories about the ways listening and conversation has fallen apart and faltered in our own lives and communities. We have learned how hard listening is. What if the church was a place where we learned and practiced together the gifts of what listening can bring? As Christians we have a deep faith and trust in this listening, as Jesus reminds us that when two or three are gathered that Christ is here in and between us. In our particular tradition, we depend and trust in the Spirit's call and guidance as the community makes decisions.

In this issue of the newsletter, you'll find invitations to lots of connections and conversations and an opportunity for all of us to learn together about listening to the Spirit as we listen to and with one another. I hope you might find a way you'd like to take part.

And yes, I look forward as well to other opportunities to connect with you and have a conversation. Give me a call if you'd like to find a time to connect together.

Blessings!

Peter

206-484-9814

## **Lenten Study, Soup and Bread Supper and Conversation on Refugia Faith**

**Thursdays, March 2 - April 6**

**6:00-7:30pm in the classroom off of the Ladies Parlor**

I hope you might join us for a Lenten Soup and Bread Supper and conversation about our Lenten Study Book, **Refugia Faith: Seeking Hidden Shelters, Ordinary Wonders and the Healing of the Earth** by Debra Rienstra.


As I've mentioned, it's a risky thing to offer a book to others to read. I have found this book to be a beautiful and hopeful word about what it might mean to be the church in our times of great challenge and stress. And yet my hope in offering this book to you, is not that you too will necessarily agree or like it! As I have said, if you don't like it, but it prompts you to dream and wonder on what you do think about the future of the church, the book has done its work!

**Continued Page 7**

# First Congregational Church

## March 2023



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>KEY:</b>  <b>FH - Fellowship Hall</b> <b>LP - Ladies Parlor</b> <b>CR - Classroom</b>			<b>1</b>  6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- LP  7:00 PM-AA-FH	<b>2</b>  2:00 PM – Deacon's Mtng. 6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP 6:00 PM Lenten Study-CR  7 :00 PM-AA-FH	<b>3</b>  <b>WORLD DAY OF PRAYER</b>  Pastor's Sabbath	<b>4</b>  7:00 PM-AA-FH
<b>5 SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT</b>  9:00 AM – Adult Bible Class – Revelation 10:00 AM-Worship Service  <i>Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz</i>	<b>6</b>  <b>Happy Birthday!</b> <b>Elizabeth Edney</b>  Pam out of office  7:00 PM – AA - FH	<b>7</b>  10AM – Men's Breakfast – Littleton Diner  Pam out of office	<b>8</b>  6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- LP  7:00 PM-AA-FH	<b>9</b>  <b>Happy Birthday!</b> <b>Glenda Iles</b>  8:00 AM – Property – CR 6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP 6:00 PM Lenten Study-CR  7 :00 PM-AA-FH	<b>10</b>  Pastor's Sabbath	<b>11</b>  7:00 PM-AA-FH
<b>12 THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT</b>  9:00 AM – Adult Bible Class – Revelation 10:00 AM-Worship Service  <i>Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz</i>	<b>13</b>  5:30 PM – SLLC BOD - Zoom  <b>Pastor Away</b>  7:00 PM – AA - FH	<b>14</b>  <b>Pastor Away</b>	<b>15</b>  6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- LP  7:00 PM-AA-FH	<b>16</b>  6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP 6:00 PM Lenten Study-CR  <b>Pastor Away</b>  7 :00 PM-AA-FH	<b>17</b>    <b>Pastor Away</b>	<b>18</b>  <b>Pastor Away</b>  7:00 PM-AA-FH
<b>19 FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT</b>  9:00 AM – Adult Bible Class – Revelation 10:00 AM-Worship Service  <i>Worship Leader TBD</i>  <i>One Great Hour of Sharing Special Offering</i>  1:00PM – Private function-FH	<b>20</b>  7:00 PM – AA - FH	<b>21</b>  6:00PM – Eastern Star – FH	<b>22</b>  <b>Happy Anniversary!</b> <b>Alison &amp; Ron Bolt</b>  6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- LP  7:00 PM – AA – FH	<b>23</b>  <b>Happy Birthday!</b> <b>Pam Nute</b>  9:30 AM – Council-CR/Zoom 6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP 6:00 PM Lenten Study-CR  7 :00 PM-AA-FH	<b>24</b>  Pastor's Sabbath	<b>25</b>  <b>Happy Birthday!</b> <b>Roberta Lavoie</b>  7:00 PM-AA-FH
<b>26 FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT</b>  9:00 AM – Adult Bible Class – Revelation 10:00 AM-Worship Service  <i>Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz</i>	<b>27</b>  Pam out of office  7:00 PM – AA - FH	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>  6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- LP  7:00 PM – AA – FH	<b>30</b>  1:00 PM – Ladies Society –LP 6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP  7 :00 PM-AA-FH	<b>31</b>  SLLC Closed-Staff Dev.  Pastor's Sabbath	

### Financial Report

January 31, 2023	YTD
Member support:	\$11,652
Scheduled w/d from trust funds	\$ 2,000
Other Income:	\$ 1,454
Total Income:	\$15,106
Total Expenses:	\$16,423
<b>Net:</b>	<b>\$ -1,317</b>

### Confirmation:

First Congregational Church in Littleton has joined with United Community Church in St. Johnsbury and Lancaster Congregational Church of Christ to offer a confirmation class for older elementary children and youth beginning Sunday, March 5. We are planning to meet on the first Sunday of each month at 3pm from March through October. We have several special events we are coordinating including sharing worship at each other's churches and attending the Confirmation Retreat at the Horton Center in September. If you know others who might like to take part, we'd love to have them join us!



### Special Offering March 19, 2023

It's time to share.

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) special mission offering of the United Church of Christ involves you in disaster, refugee/immigration, and development ministries throughout the world. When a disaster strikes or people are displaced or made refugees by violence or extreme poverty, you are part of the immediate response and of the long-term recovery.

Through OGHS you engage in holistic development programs including health care, education, agriculture, food sustainability, micro-financing and women's empowerment. Because the UCC relates in mutual partnership to churches and organizations through Global Ministries and worldwide response & recovery networks, your contributions to One Great Hour of Sharing put you in the right place at the right time for the relief, accompaniment and recovery of the most vulnerable. You meet immediate needs and you address the underlying causes that create those needs in the first place.

### Men's Breakfast

Tuesday, March 7 at 10am at the Littleton Diner! Come join Ed and Peter for coffee and conversation!

**We Believe....We Wonder...We Need**  
**From the Church Council of First Congregational Church**  
**February 19, 2023**

During this interim time, specifically the last 5 months, we have noticed that there is new energy and excitement about the possibilities that are before us. There is more connection and we are grateful for the work Peter is doing to connect with people, connect people with people, and connect people with the church. He has also helped many of us identify and accomplish things that we did not think we could do. He has shown us what active listening looks like and has brought people together in small groups to work on specific issues. Peter has led the council in two retreats to help us identify who we are as this body of Christ and start pondering how we see ourselves moving forward into the future.

This last retreat we continued to focus on some core issues that will help us better understand who we are and what we are called to do as a church.

In small groups and in the full council we came up with the following:

**WE BELIEVE:**

- We are in a transformative time.
- God is in the process and has a plan for our church.
- Each of us is a part of the body of Christ, has unique abilities, and we can use those abilities for the glory of God.
- We are a community of believers who can make a greater impact collectively, rather than individually.

**WE WONDER:**

- What would happen if we listened more carefully in order to hear God's plan for our church.
- How our church fits into our changing community and world.
- If there are unmet spiritual needs in our area that we can help meet.
- What it would take for the people of our church to help meet those needs.

**WE NEED YOU:**

- To join in the wondering.
- To be open to whatever changes God's plan has for us.
- To think outside the box and be flexible in your thinking.
- To identify your own gifts and abilities and how you can use them to contribute to the mission of the church and be supportive of the gifts of others.

We share these with you to bring you into the conversation. We invite YOU join us in wondering, exploring, and fulfilling God's plan. Your active participation is key to our success.

### An Invitation from the Diversity Task Force of the Church Council

For the past three months, we have been meeting as a small task group formed by the Church Council to learn more about what the Bible has to say about diversity and welcoming all as beloved children of God. While our conversations initially focused on sexual orientation, we have also read materials on gender identity, marriage and what it might mean to be a community that welcomes all of us in our diverse experiences.

Through our study and conversations these past months we are all better informed and want to learn more with you. We have learned about the experiences of others that are different than our own. We have grown in our empathy and care. We have learned about making a safe and brave space for conversation about topics that we disagree on.

We believe that we are called to love our neighbor as ourselves. We believe we are called to do unto others as we would have others do unto us. We believe that we all are welcome to Christ's table and that in our baptisms that we are reminded that we are all God's beloved. We believe by engaging in these conversations together we can grow as a people and a church. We know that we want to have a conversation about topics we might not agree on and that we need to make a safe space where all views are welcome and respected. We want to learn to listen and speak as a community of love to and with one another.

A short pamphlet "Homosexuality and the Bible" by Biblical scholar Walter Wink will be a resource for our conversations.

We will be meeting in a hybrid format (on zoom and in person) after church on these days. We want to include you but if you can't attend - let us know a day and time that might work for you and we will hope to gather another mid-week group together.

**Title: Loving Our Neighbor: A Conversation on the Church, Bible and Diversity.**

**Goal of the conversations:** To promote a conversation on diversity for the sake of being a more welcoming community for all. To learn more about the role of the Bible in shaping our lives and decisions. To learn about the experience of others and so challenge ourselves and grow in our understanding and faith in order to see all people as beloved children of God.

**Timeline:** 45 minute sessions after church from 11:30-12:15: April 23, 30, May 7, 14 and 21. We are open to having an alternate time to meet as well. Let us know if that would be more convenient for you.

April 16: Introduction: Why are we offering this series of conversations? Why do we think this is important? What are our goals for this conversation? Sharing our stories.

April 23: "Made in God's Image" - Bodies and the Bible.

Together we'll create a safe and brave space for conversation.

What does it mean that we are "made in God's image?"

How do we read and understand scripture?

How might we talk about the gifts we have received and our own struggles of being embodied persons and being "made in God's image"?

What questions do you bring?

Why might we talk about our experience as embodied persons at church?

**An Invitation from the Diversity Task Force of the Church Council (Cont.)**

April 30: The Language of Embodiment (our various experience as people with bodies)

How have the terms for our experiences changed over time?

A great time to bring your questions about the expressions and representations of who we are and how they change.

An orientation to the words we will be using and discussing.

May 7: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and the Bible

What is sexual orientation?

Why might it be helpful to talk about?

What does the Bible say about sexual orientation and being beloved children of God?

What does the Bible say about marriage?

May 14: Gender Identity and the Bible

What is gender identity?

Why talk about it?

What does the Bible say about gender identity?

May 21: Where do I stand? Where do we stand?

Tolerance, Respect, Open, Affirming, Advocate, Ally?

How do we individually and as a community relate to each other in our diversity and difference?

What might it mean to be a welcoming congregation? Or not?

Why might we want to be? Or not?

Where do we hear God's call?

Where then do we go from here? What are our next steps?

We have other conversations we want to have as well about our embodied experience including reproductive rights, neurodivergence (including autism and Asperger Syndrome), race and class. We hope you will join us as we continue to learn and explore what it means to be the body of Christ and beloved children of God.

Let us know if you have questions!

Tina Peabody

Su Schott

Linda Warden

Pastor Peter

A \$10,000 gift was given this week from the Green Living Trust to the church in memory of Rev. Wilbur and Dolores Green after passing away in January. Mrs. Green passed in 2020. The Rev. Green began his ministry at this church on July 15, 1958. He was ordained and installed on October 12, 1958 and served until 1962. Young and dedicated church workers, Rev. and Mrs. Green gave great attention to the families of the congregation. Both became deeply involved in the spiritual life of the church, its organizations and outreach. In 1961 during his tenure the church took up the proposal to become a member of the United Church of Christ and at a special meeting on March 19<sup>th</sup> of the same year, a vote was taken to approve: 59 Yes and 45 No. At his departure, church membership numbered 313.

**Lenten Study, Soup and Bread Supper and Conversation on Refugia Faith**  
**Thursdays, March 2 - April 6**  
**6:00-7:30pm in the classroom off of the Ladies Parlor**

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As I've mentioned, it's a risky thing to offer a book to others to read. I have found this book to be a beautiful and hopeful word about what it might mean to be the church in our times of great challenge and stress. And yet my hope in offering this book to you, is not that you too will necessarily agree or like it! As I have said, if you don't like it, but it prompts you to dream and wonder on what you do think about the future of the church, the book has done its work!

Each week we'll gather to share what Good News, what Hopeful Word, what Good Questions and Challenges we hear in each chapter. Our goal is not to convince anyone of anything or change anyone's opinion (I've never been successful at that!) but to wonder and inquire together on what it means to be the Community of Christ, The Body of Christ in the world today. Debra Rienstra believes that small communities have a particularly critical role to play as a life-giving power for transformation and renewal in the world. What do you think? Come and join us in making a safe space, a brave space, to learn, wonder and grow in our faith together.

How can you participate? So many ways!

- 1) There is a book to read for those who would like to. I can order a copy for you and it is also available on Audiobook and Kindle.
- 2) Or you can read the study guide and questions for each week. Ask me for a copy or pick one up on Sunday.
- 3) Or you can just come for soup, bread and conversation and skip the reading. Each week we'll provide a short summary of the book and you'll be able to jump right into the conversation.

*From the Flycover:*

*Refugia Faith explores how Christian spirituality and practice must adapt to life on a climate-altered planet.*

*Refugia (reh-FU-jee-ah) is a biological term describing places of shelter where life endures in times of crisis, such as volcanic disruption, fire, or stressed environment. Ideally, these refugia endure, expand, and connect so that new life emerges.*

*In this book, Debra Rienstra asks: In this era of ecological devastation, how can Christians become people of refugia? How can we find and nurture these refugia in the earth, our human cultural systems, and our spiritual lives? How can we apply all our love and creativity to this task as never before?*

*By weaving nature writing, personal narrative, and theological reflection, Rienstra proposes a way to transform Christian spirituality and practice, become a healer of the damaged earth, and inspire others to do the same.*

*Debra Rienstra is a professor of English at Calvin University, where she has taught since 1996, specializing in early British literature and creative writing. She is the author of Worship Words: Discipling Language for Faith Ministry, So Much More: An Invitation to Christian Spirituality, and Great with Child: On Faith, Fullness and Becoming a Mother.*

## Sunday Morning Worship:

### A Worship Series for the Season of Lent: “Seeking: Honest Questions for Deeper Faith”

This Lenten Season we are grateful for collaborating with “A Sanctified Art” Worship Resource to provide a Lenten Worship Series focused on Questions of Faith. This Lenten Season, we will read many stories of Jesus encountering people who are seeking: a new beginning, a different life, a deeper faith. In these interactions, assumptions are disrupted, a new perspective is revealed, mystery grows.

Like the characters in our Lenten scriptures, we are also seeking many things in our own lives and our life together as church. We are listening for the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit as we discern the way forward as individuals and as a community of faith. This Lent we are all invited to engage in the spiritual practice of seeking - by asking questions, and by staying open, curious and nimble. We hope that this season for all of us will soften our assumptions and expand our perspectives. We pray that these questions will create a safe space to explore - to be drawn more deeply into the fullness of life, into the heart of God.

**Lenten Devotional:** A beautiful Lenten Devotional is available to accompany the worship series. Pick one up at church or let us know and we'll send you one! I'd love to know what you find helpful in it, what you liked and what worked for you.

Sunday March 5  
Second Sunday of Lent  
How Do We Begin Again?  
John 3:1-17, Genesis 12: 1-4

Sunday, March 12  
Third Sunday of Lent  
We All Come Thirsty: Will You Give Me a Drink?  
John 4:5-42, Exodus 17:1-7

Sunday, March 19  
Fourth Sunday of Lent  
We Come with Questions: Who Sinned?  
John 9:1-41  
14

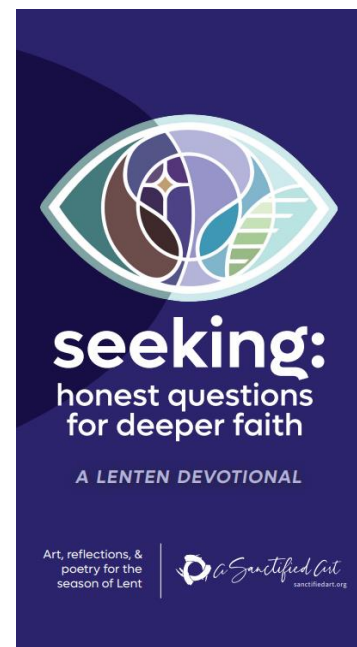
Sunday, March 26  
Fifth Sunday of Lent  
Can These Bones Live?  
John 11:1-45, Ezekiel 37: 1-

Sunday April 2  
**Palm Sunday**  
Where are you Headed?  
Matthew 21:1-11

Thursday, April 6  
**Maundy Thursday**  
Will You Wash My Feet?  
John 13:1-17, 31b-35

**Good Friday, April 7**  
Why Have You Forsaken Me?  
Matthew 27:27-50

**Easter Sunday, April 9**  
Who are You Looking For?  
John 20:1-18





## A Brief Recap of the 220<sup>th</sup> Annual Business Meeting – February 19, 2023

Phil Krill introduced Ken Kinder of Stifel Nicolaus, investment advisor, to present the financial report of the Trust Funds for 2022. Ken was thankful to see the many familiar friendly faces. Ken reported that the market in December of 2021 was at an all-time high and it was expected that a market correction would take place in 2022, but the market continued to fall as a direct response of the actions of the Federal Reserve. Looking at where we are in this moment and where the markets are is exactly where the church's portfolio is supposed to be and is in line of where we've been all along. There has been a 7.38% compounded gain over time (13 years) which is precisely the return that is wanted in a portfolio. Ken assures that the assets continue to rise, things are okay and the investments are sound and that no major shift or change is needed. Ken continues the careful management of the portfolio with high quality stocks and bonds; US companies who have performed well and have stood the test of time. Ken's plan is to stay the course!

The 2023 proposed budget was presented: \$189,662 in income and \$215,600 in expenses for a deficit of \$25,938. Phil Krill reported much thought and prayer had gone into the building of the budget. A new task force (introduced earlier during worship) was created by the council to address the original \$34,900 gap. Phil reported that progress has already been made as there was an increase in pledges of \$8,962 since the publishing of the Annual Report. After a second presentation from the task force with views and plans for the upcoming year, there was little discussion. Mary Menzies made a motion to approve the budget as presented by the council. Linda Warden seconded. There was no further discussion. All were in favor of approving the 2023 budget as presented. Alice Muh gave appreciation and expressed how impressed she was with the congregation's generosity for special offerings in 2022.

The Council recommended the slate of officers for 2023: Alice Muh, Moderator (1<sup>st</sup> year, 1<sup>st</sup> term); Dan Kiefer, Vice-Moderator (1<sup>st</sup> year, 1<sup>st</sup> term); Joyce Krill, Treasurer (1<sup>st</sup> year, 2<sup>nd</sup> term); Rachel Clark, Assistant Treasurer (1<sup>st</sup> year, 2<sup>nd</sup> term). Dudley Bailey made a motion to accept the slate of officers as presented. Tina Peabody seconded and all were in favor. Mary Menzies expressed many thanks to all who serve. Peter, on behalf of the congregation, gave thanks to Tim Gould for his three years as Moderator during unprecedented times that included a pandemic and a pastor retiring.

There was a short presentation from the newly formed Diversity Task Force who had met six times to learn more about what the Bible has to say about diversity. They extended an invitation to the congregation to share what they have learned in a safe and respectful place to express thoughts. (See more on pages 5 and 6 of this newsletter.) Alice Muh brought attention to page 21 of the Annual Report (committee nominating report) and invited people to sign up to serve on a committee by contacting the chairperson. She will be calling on the committees to meet soon to set an agenda for opportunities and challenges for the upcoming year.

A motion was made by Tina Peabody to approve the 2022 Annual Report, Rachel Clark seconded. There was no further discussion and was approved by all.

Under new business, Peter gave thanks to the church staff for their talents and dedication. The meeting adjourned in prayer at 11:55 am.

### The 2023 Church Officers



Left to right: Rachel Clark (Assistant Treasurer), Dan Kiefer (Vice Moderator), Joyce Krill (Treasurer), Alice Muh, (Moderator) and Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz

**We covenant to honor and respect your leadership, to keep you in our prayers and to join you in being a community of Christ in service of God, all people and creation.**

First Congregational Church, UCC  
189 Main Street  
Littleton, NH 03561  
Return Service Requested

# **STEEPLE MINUTE**

## **MARCH 2022**



### **Steeple Minute**

A brief newsletter of the  
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[www.1stconglittleton.org](http://www.1stconglittleton.org)

#### **Church Staff**

Administrative Assistant: Pam Nute  
Organist & Choir Director: Dottie Morton  
Sexton: Reg LaFlam

#### **Officers**

Moderator: Alice Muh  
Vice Moderator: Dan Kiefer  
Treasurer: Joyce Krill  
Assistant Treasurer: Rachel Clark

#### **Committee Chairs**

Christian Education: Kim Smith  
Deacons: Mary Menzies  
Finance: Phil Krill  
Mission: Linda Warden  
Music: Tina Peabody  
Personnel Relations: Tina Peabody  
Property Management: Laurie Boswell

#### **Shining Lights Learning Center**

Board Chair: Suzanne Schott  
Director: Melissa Kam

