

Steeple Talk

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

April 2012

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Pastor's Message



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Upcoming Events

- ◆ April 1@10:00 AM
Palm Sunday service
w/First Communion
- ◆ April 5 @ 6:00 PM
Maundy Thursday Pot-
Luck Supper in
Fellowship Hall
followed by 7:00 PM
Tenebrae Service
- ◆ April 6@ 7:00 PM
Good Friday Service
followed by Prayer
Vigil
- ◆ April 8 @ 10:00 AM
Easter Sunday Service
- ◆ April 12 @8:00 AM
Men's Breakfast
Fellowship at
Nielson's
- ◆ April 11 @ 1:30 PM
Ladies Societv

Editor: Alice Muh
muhfamily@roadrunner.com
Production staff:
Pat Whipple & Anna Jackman

It's been a very odd winter. Last year, I sat at my writing table and looked out at an amazing white wonderland. I got a new appreciation for the Christmas Carol, "In the Bleak Midwinter," which has the odd line in it, "Snow was falling, snow on snow, snow on snow." I had a real feeling for that song by the time winter was over last year. This year we've hardly had any snow—ice, that's a different matter—but not much snow. It's balmy outside and even the mountains are losing their little bit of frosting.

It's also been an odd winter in some other ways. I've gotten more involved with the community; I did the training for LifeBridge, so I can become a mentor for a young man in our school system. It was a very good training and I'm looking forward to the chance to become involved in this new way. I strongly encourage other people who have a call to touch a young life to consider this way of doing it.

We had six third-graders in our First Communion Class this year, and we look forward to welcoming them to the Table of Blessing on Palm Sunday. I've been working with two couples who will be married in our church. I attended Prepared to Serve along with a couple of other folks from the church, and we were exposed to some really exciting new ideas for ministry here. I was especially excited by a workshop that presented a new paradigm for Sunday School that is specially designed for the small church. I want us to look at it. I think it might suit us well. We'll have a chance to hear more about it at the Annual Meeting of the Association on May 5, because the same presenter will be here to talk with that meeting.

Meanwhile, I've been enjoying the growth of our relationships in the church. My work with the staff has been more and more rewarding. I've begun to have some really deep and powerful conversations with individuals and small groups. I really enjoyed our course in Psalms. I find myself reading and remembering psalms a lot these days, and my experience of them is very much richer for our shared study.

Now that we've ratified our new Vision Statements, we've been looking for ways to use them in the work of the church. Each committee is using these statements as a way of reflecting on the work it is called to do. Alice and I are planning to visit each committee to see if there are ways we can facilitate that reflection.

Our Ecumenical Lenten Services have been a wonderful time of sharing our common faith with neighbors and friends. I look forward to sharing Holy Week with you as we continue to share our friendship with Jesus and with one another. And through all these things, as many of you know, I've been walking through some difficult times with my family. I am so very grateful for the prayers and practical aid I've received from the people of this church. You are a great blessing.

Meanwhile, the sun is shining. The trees are starting to bud. Everyone assures me we're in for more snow before winter actually leaves, but today it's impossible to believe such a thing. Sun or snow, God is good all the time, they say. And I believe it is so.

blessings,
david



First Congregational Church



April 2012

Office Hours: Mon - Fri. 8:30am - 1:30pm

Pastor's Office Hours: Tues - Fri 9:00 am - 2:00 pm

Music Director's Office Hours: Weds 4:00 -8:00 pm, Sun 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Palm Sunday 9:00 AM-Adult Bible study/ choir rehearsal 10:00 AM- Palm Sunday /Sunday School/Communion & First Communion 11:15 AM-Coffee Fellowship 7:00 PM-Ballroom Dancing	2 Pastor's Sabbath 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 7:00 PM-NCSC Meeting	3 10:30 AM-Clergy Group Meeting 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 5:00 PM- Property Committee meeting 7:00 PM-AI Anon Ladies Parlor	4 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 6:00 PM-Choir Rehearsal 8:00 PM-Weds. Night AA	5 Maundy Thursday 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 6:00 pm Maundy Thursday potluck supper 7:00 pm Tenebrae Service	6 Good Friday 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 7:00 pm Ecumenical Good Friday Service	7 7:30 PM-AA - Fellowship Hall
8 Easter Sunday 6:00 AM Ecumenical Sunrise Service/Grove St 9:00 AM Choir rehearsal 10:00 AM- Intergenerational Easter Sunday Service 11:15 AM-Coffee Fellowship and Children's Egg Hunt	9 Pastor's Sabbath 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 5:00 PM Finance committee meeting 5:30 PM- SLLC Meeting	10 10:30 AM-Riverglen Service 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 7:00 PM-AI Anon Ladies Parlor	11 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 1:30 PM- Ladies Society /Ladies Parlor 6:30 PM-Choir Rehearsal 8:00 PM-Weds. Night AA	12 7:00 AM-Ladies Ecum. Breakfast 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 6:30 PM Christian Ed. committee meeting	13 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	14 8:00 AM- Men's Breakfast at the Nielson's 7:30 PM-AA - Fellowship Hall
15 9:00 AM-Adult Bible study / choir rehearsal 10:00 AM- Worship/Sunday School 11:15 AM-Coffee Fellowship 11:15 AM Music Committee Meeting 7:00 PM-Ballroom Dancing	16 Pastor's Sabbath 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 7:00 PM-NCSC Meeting	17 Pastor David vacation 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 4:30 PM- Dinner Bell ~All Saints ~WE HOST 7:00 PM-AI Anon Ladies Parlor	18 Pastor David vacation 10:00 AM-Clergy Group/Ladies Parlor 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 6:30 PM-Choir Rehearsal 8:00 PM-Weds. Night AA	19 Pastor David vacation 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	20 Pastor David vacation 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	21 Pastor David vacation 7:30 PM-AA - Fellowship Hall
22 Pastor David vacation 9:00 AM-Adult Bible study /choir rehearsal 10:00 AM- Worship/Sunday School Rev. Alden Blake-preaching 11:15 AM-Coffee Fellowship 7:00 PM-Ballroom Dancing	23 Pastor's Sabbath 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	24 Pastor David back from vacation 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 6:30 PM- Church Council Meeting 7:00 PM-AI Anon Ladies Parlor	25 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall 6:30 PM-Choir Rehearsal 8:00 PM-Weds. Night AA	26 7:00 AM-Ladies Ecum. Breakfast 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	27 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall	28 7:30 PM-AA - Fellowship Hall
29 9:00 AM-Adult Bible study/ choir rehearsal 10:00 AM-Worship, Sunday School and Food Collection 11:15 AM-Coffee Fellowship 7:00 PM-Ballroom Dancing	30 Pastor's Sabbath 11:30 AM-AA - Fellowship Hall					



Mission Spotlight

EPIC CHURCH, a church plant in the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania which our church has faithfully supported for several years, will soon move from its rented space at The Banana Factory art gallery in Bethlehem, PA to new quarters in a former American Legion Hall in nearby Fountain Hill, PA. The church successfully counter-offered \$280,000 to purchase the property against an original asking price of \$400,000, and closed on the building on February 27. The new facility, to be called the Epic Center, will house not only a worship hall, classrooms and administrative space, but will also serve as a conference center and event space. The church inherits as well a charming tenant restaurant, "Claudio's", which serves authentic Puerto Rican fare for lunch and dinner. Between carry-over bookings and new business, the event space is substantially committed through September 2012. Their new neighbors in Fountain Hill are excited about the Epic presence in their community.

Epic Church is one of two home missions of the Penn-Del District of the Assembly of God denomination. Pastor Rob Schlegel continues to spend considerable time soliciting support from other congregations within the district and, together with Teaching Pastor Brian Muh, is overseeing assorted contractors and 40 church volunteers in renovating the new facility, with the first worship service scheduled for May 6. Major improvements to date have included roof replacement, asbestos abatement, new furniture and considerable patching and painting. Major initiatives for the immediate future include flooring replacement and construction of classrooms for the education center. Another significant project for which funding is being sought is the renovation of the front of the building for ADA accessibility and to make it more welcoming.

As it prepares to move into its seventh year, Epic Church enjoys an average worship attendance of 125, which includes 5 teachers and about 35 children in the youth ministry. Despite its relative youth and the financial demands posed by the new facility, the church is committed to maintaining its 10% contribution to mission support.

For more information about Epic activities and current events, visit www.livingthestory.com.

Contributions may be sent to Epic Church, P.O. Box 22221, Lehigh Valley, PA 18002-2221. Your continued prayers for Epic's growth in service to God and in meeting the needs of its target population in the Lehigh Valley are greatly appreciated.

Dinner Bell

Sign up now!



We next host the Dinner Bell community meal on Tuesday, April 17 at All Saints Episcopal Church. A sign-up sheet for volunteers and donations of casseroles, desserts and other food items will be available in the sanctuary during Sunday worship, in the fellowship hall during Sunday coffee fellowship, and outside Pat Whipple's office during the week. Dinner Bell has been serving an average of 70 guests each week. As a reminder, casseroles should be either delivered hot shortly prior to serving time (5:00 p.m.) or dropped off early enough to allow for necessary reheating. Some gluten-free options are always welcome.

One Great Hour of Sharing



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING: The "One Great Hour of Sharing" offering, one of four annual special offerings conducted by the United Church of Christ, will be taken on Palm Sunday, April 1. For over 65 years, the United Church of Christ has partnered with seven other Christian denominations in a collaborative effort to share our resources with those in great need. Your generous OGHS offering helps provide funding for emergency and disaster relief in the United States and helps support health, educational, agricultural and emergency relief initiatives in 138 countries worldwide. For those who were not in church on March 25, we encourage you to view an excellent video on the UCC website; go to www.ucc.org/oghs. One Great Hour of Sharing got off to a rousing start on March 25, with the church school youth raising \$138.65 through the sale of craft items.

WHEN YOU SHARE, PEOPLE HAVE
ENOUGH FOOD, WATER AND SHELTER.

WHEN YOU SHARE, YOU HELP OTHERS IN
TIMES OF DISASTER.

SHARING BRINGS JOY TO OTHERS...TO
YOU....AND TO GOD.

“Classifieds and Notices”

<p style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold; color: #000080;">Coming Soon!</p>  <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: #000080;">ALL CHURCH WORK DAY</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO DO A VARIETY OF CLEAN UP / FIX UP CHORES.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Watch for time, date, and sign up!</p>	<p>The next Dinner Bell that we host is April 17 at 5:00 pm at the All Saints Church.</p> <p style="text-align: center; color: #008000;">*****</p> <p>Please sign up NOW to bring a casserole, side dish, rolls or dessert.</p> <p>Your help is also needed to help set up, serve, or clean up.</p> <p>Call Bob Muh or the church office for more information or to volunteer</p>	<p style="font-weight: bold;">Opportunities to serve</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; text-decoration: underline;">We need:</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Ushers and Greeters Sunday School teachers and substitutes Choir members Musicians for special music Worship planners Helpers for special projects and fundraisers Caring Tree ministries helpers Call the church office to find out more!</p>
<p style="font-weight: bold;">Coming soon: <i>Explorers' Class</i></p> <p>This class is for those who would like to know more about the church (especially those who are thinking of joining), for a time of sharing about Christianity in general, the United Church of Christ and the First Congregational Church. The class is open to everyone and is a great way to get better acquainted with the workings of the church and the people who make up our church community. If you would like to participate in this contact Pastor David.</p>	<p style="font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">HELPED WANTED:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A GRAPHIC DESIGNER TO WORK WITH THE DEACONS</p> <p>The deacons are in need of some stationery and calling cards to help them with their outreach ministry. The project is called the “Caring Tree.” If you think you could be of assistance, please call Barbara Holland, 444-1104.</p> 	<p style="font-size: 1.2em;">Decisions become easier when your will to please God outweighs your will to please the world.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">~Anso Coetzer~</p>

A Special Thank You Note

Dear Church Friends,

Many thanks for your care and concerns during the past ten months of my recuperating. Your thoughtful visits, encouraging cards, gifts of food and flowers have been a blessing.

Knowing that you've kept me in your thoughts and prayers has been very comforting.

With sincere appreciation,

Poppy Clark

Holy Week

Holy Week marks the conclusion of our 40 day journey through Lent, a period when some of us took on a particular discipline, added a spiritual exercise, or undertook some special act of love. Each year we are given this extraordinary time to think through what it means to be a beloved child of God and how we will respond to this love. But now this time is almost over. Ahead of us is a week in which we experience the spiritual highs and lows of our Christian faith.

The week begins with parades (Palm Sunday). It includes the night Jesus gave us a new ritual - a meal, communion (Maundy Thursday). Its low point is Jesus' trial, death sentence on a common cross and his death (Good Friday). Holy Week concludes with Jesus' resurrection (Easter), the first day of the new week. We will celebrate as follows.

April 1~ Palm Sunday Service

10 am: Parade of palms and celebration of first communion

April 5 ~ Maundy Thursday

6 pm: Potluck dinner (dessert provided by the deacons) in Fellowship Hall.

7 pm: Communion followed by Tenebrae service, Fellowship Hall

April 6 ~ Good Friday

7 pm: Ecumenical Service (5 churches participating) Following worship, Pastor David will remain so people can stay to pray for as long as they wish. There will be no overnight vigil.

April 8 ~ Easter

10 am: All are welcome for a festival worship service and a coffee hour following. There will be special activities for children.

Submitted by Ann Craxton

He is risen indeed! So what is next?

The Easter Season begins on Easter Sunday and extends to Pentecost Sunday, a fifty-day celebration of the risen Christ. On Easter Sunday the church tells the story of the empty tomb and the charge by the messenger to "go and tell." For the next several weeks Christians tell and retell stories of Jesus' first followers who encountered him against all hope. Amidst their doubt, fear, and longing, suddenly he was present--risen from the dead, and encountering them in a locked room, by the lakeshore, on the road to Emmaus.

The church combines these resurrection stories with stories from Acts of the Apostles: the efforts of the first Christian communities to spread the gospel through the world.

The early church celebrated these weeks after Easter and gave them the name *Mystagogia*. They instructed newly baptized Christians during this time, and encouraged them to explore, in their new community, the joyful mystery of the encounter of the risen Christ with their lives.

Today the church wears celebratory colors during Eastertide; in western cultures this has often been white and gold. As we celebrate, we learn again to recognize the risen Jesus where he is to be found: in our midst, in our stories, in the breaking of the bread--and as we faithfully bear witness to the reality of Christ's presence to the world.

What is next for you?

From the www.UCC.ORG web site:
Weekly Seeds: Easter

~LADIES SOCIETY~

The Ladies Society Meeting will be held April 11 in the Ladies Parlor at 1:30 p.m. Our special guests will be Jean Marsh and Kathy Somerville to speak with us on the "Relay for Life", an annual project sponsored by the American Cancer Society. . A follow up on that presentation will be given by Reverend Weddington and Alice Muh on our vision statements as accepted at the Annual Meeting. Refreshments - and an opportunity to sign a card for one of our former members, Mil Spillane, as she celebrates her 100th birthday this month.

Barbara Holland

Special Event!

OUR CHURCH TO HOST NCA ANNUAL MEETING

Our church has been selected to host the 2012 Annual Meeting of the North Country Association of the United Church of Christ. The event will be Saturday, May 5th from 11 am to 3 pm.

The featured event is a workshop titled: *Living the Promise with Children and Adults: In NCA Church Life, Small is Sensational!* This one hour workshop at 1 pm will be led by the Rev. Cynthia Bagley, Pastor of the FCC of Dunbarton. Bagley demonstrates how “Small is Sensational” when it comes to creating a church school program that engages both kids and adults, without exhausting everyone. At Prepared to Serve in February, this workshop was sold out and well received. **If you are interested in Christian Education (especially for young people), plan to attend.**

The schedule for the day looks like this.

10:30 am: Gather for coffee and conversation
 11:00 am: Opening devotional
 11:15 am: Celebration of special activities in North Country Churches
 12:15 pm: Lunch (nominal fee)
 1:00 pm: Workshop
 2:00 pm: Annual meeting of NCA
 2:30 pm: Closing Worship



Call the church office if you can help host this event. Mark your calendar to attend. Look for more information in the church bulletin or on-line on in a special e-mail to church members. **This event is open to everyone.** Since we are the hosts, we can show our special brand of North Country hospitality.

Submitted by Ann Craxton

UPDATE ON DEPORTATION OF INDONESIAN CHRISTIANS: Several weeks ago, our church was asked to disseminate information on the looming deportation of 95 Indonesian Christians living in the Dover, NH area. Some limited research suggests the following: Many of these individuals, who came to the United States on tourist visas, have been residents for as long as fifteen years. They fled Indonesia to escape religious persecution, a campaign of intimidation which included the burning of homes and businesses, personal injury and some deaths. Their problems began when they failed to meet a one-year window within which to apply for asylum status. By all accounts, they had become integrated into their communities as productive, law-abiding citizens. In the wake of the September 2001 terrorist attacks, they complied with government mandates and voluntarily disclosed their presence in the U.S. In 2009, deportation orders were issued, but were thereafter stayed with the imposition of reporting requirements. The government is now actively pursuing deportation, in apparent contradiction to administration directives to focus deportation efforts on persons with criminal records and those who pose a clear risk to national security. These deportations will mean that, in some instances, families will be split up; for example, some of the potential deportees have children who are American citizens. Remedial legislation (HR 3590, the “Indonesian Family Refugee Act”, co-sponsored by Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney (D-N.Y.) and Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-N.J.) appeared doomed for lack of a Republican co-sponsor until Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.) signed on on February 17 as co-sponsor. It is entirely fair to wonder if more timely action might have improved the prospects of a favorable outcome for many of these immigrants. Those who wish to be heard on this issue are encouraged to contact Senator Jeanne Shaheen, Senator Kelly Ayotte, or Rep. Charlie Bass.

Submitted by Bob Muh

Live simply

**Love
generously**

Care deeply

Speak kindly

**Leave the rest
to God**

Church Council Report

The church council met via email for March. Below is a summary.

US Cellular: a revised lease agreement was sent back to them for comment and approval. We are waiting on their response. They have sent in completed drawings that show tower and stage usage which match their verbal description.

May 5th North Country Association Annual Meeting and special event will be at our church. Planning is in process. We will need some volunteers for this.

Christian Ed.- planning spring events for Palm Sunday, Easter, and Celebration Sunday on May 20. There are 6 children that participated in the First Communion class and they will celebrate their first communion on April 1 at the Palm Sunday service instead of Maundy Thursday.

Mission- coordinating One Great Hour of Sharing special offering and Dinner Bell in April.

Property- The committee is planning a work day, to be announced. They are addressing hot water leak in broom closet. Cost of new flooring in men's bathroom was only \$200. The new lift has encountered some operating difficulties which have been addressed. Andover Organ Company sent in their recommendations for the organ for heat and humidity related issues. They recommended a programmable thermostat to reduce heat significantly during the week. SLLC is offering the church their key pad for the kitchen entry when their replace their door entry system.

Research is underway for new audio-visuals for the sanctuary and fellowship hall. Signage is also being researched.

Shining Lights Learning Center staff will be undergoing mandatory training this spring. Staffing is relatively stable with minimal turnover. Student numbers remain stable and tuition is covering expenses less space usage and utilities. The main access door will be upgraded to provide more security. There will be a spring fundraiser.

Finance met with Ken Kinder to review investments. Will be looking at how we use the trust funds to make it more sustainable. They are working with Pat Whipple on financial reporting. Monthly reports are available in the church office.

Personnel committee met with nothing new to report.

Deacons met and planning continued for Lent and Holy Week. Caring Tree ministry discussed and deacons are looking for assistance with some aspects of that.

Pastor David and Alice Muh will be visiting all committees to continue the discussion of our vision.

A request to share our operations manual was received from the Franconia church, and this was granted.

Christian Education



Can you believe that we are planning for the end of the year activities for Church School? Upcoming events follow:

This spring's 6 communicants will participate in Palm Sunday services rather than Maundy Thursday. Following worship Easter Sunday, there will be the traditional egg hunt for the children.

Psalms class has gone well. Pastor David is looking at forming an adult 'Explorers' Class' for those interested in knowing more about the church. Kim Smith is managing the cradle roll outreach ministry. The committee is working with Pastor David and Dottie Morton to try to include more 'kid friendly' music in the beginning of worship.

Celebration Sunday is planned for May 20th. Kim and dancing students will perform the Lord's Prayer through a Sacred Dance. It is hoped to have a sequel to the Adult Bible Study performance of last year and the Church School teachers will surprise us with their varied skills.

Submitted by Su Schott, Christian Ed. Committee

A PSALM OF PRAISE FROM A GRATEFUL PEOPLE

Composed by the Class in the Book of Psalms
First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
March 4, 2012

hy-wllh Hallelu-Yah!

O Love that will not let me go,
I've felt at times that you abandoned me—
when the hurricane came
and the tree fell on me,
when the waters came
and washed my hopes away.

Rescue me, strengthen me!
Help me through my present trouble!

I remember the rainbow!
You sent a host of helpers in my distress.
We thank you for bringing us out of the Pit
and giving us voices to call on You.

We will give thanks to you for your steadfast
love,
We will dwell in your house forever.

hy-wllh Hallelu-Yah!

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STEEPLE TALK

APRIL 2012



Steeple Talk

A newsletter of the
First Congregational
Church of Littleton

Holy Week Services

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Church Staff

Pastor: Rev. W. David Weddington
Administrative Assistant: Pat Whipple
Organist & Choir Director: Dottie Morton

Officers

Moderator: Alice Muh
Vice Moderator: Tina Peabody
Treasurer: Marti Faulkner
Assistant Treasurer: Dudley Bailey
Financial Secretary: _____

Committee Chairs

Christian Education: Kim Smith
Deacons: Ann Craxton
Finance & Stewardship: Dudley Bailey
Mission: Bob Muh
Music: Tina Peabody
Personnel Relations: _____
Property Management: Art Hunt
Trustee of the Trust Funds: Dick Holland

Shining Lights Learning Center

Board Chairperson: Suzanne Schott
Director: Dianah Hale

April 1 ~ 10:00 am: Palm Sunday Service with First Communion Celebration

April 5 ~ 6:00 am: Maundy Thursday potluck dinner in Fellowship Hall followed by 7:00 pm Tenebrae service

April 6 ~ 7:00 pm: Good Friday Ecumenical Service followed by prayer vigil

April 8 ~ 10:00 am: Easter Sunday Intergenerational Service by followed coffee fellowship for adults and Egg Hunt for the children