

# Steeple Minute

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

October 1, 2024

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Issue 10

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## Pastor's Message

I recently had a conversation with other church leaders about the spiritual significance and invitation as we turn to the season of Fall. Three powerful little questions were raised:

1. As we turn to fall, what do you need to gather in your spiritual barn to prepare for the coming winter?
2. What does this season of fall invite you to let fall away so new life can emerge?
3. Falling away, gathering in - what do those words invite you to reflect on?

As we turn to fall at First Congregational, we'll continue to use the Narrative Lectionary to guide our worship, and the focus this fall on Old Testament readings. **Our hope in our fall worship is to continue to build-up and support a covenant community of respect, love, care, understanding, acceptance, patience and peace. In the stress of our own lives and challenges in our wider communities, we hope coming to worship will be an encouragement and hope for all!**

On page 4, I outline the fall worship series.

Thank you for your support! It's been a true privilege to take vacation time last month to hike the Cohos Trail and I thank you for all your support so I could step out and learn more about this beautiful area where we live. We walked from the Canadian border down to Jefferson. Along the way we've met 7 moose and only 7 humans out for an afternoon stroll or birdwatching. And yes, lots of ruffed grouse we've startled off the trail, countless toads large and small, several hawks, a couple of little snakes and five tenacious mice. I'm working on some writing about our experience and looking forward to sharing it with you!

As this fall season begins, may we keep each other and the wider communities of which we are a part especially close in our hearts, our hopefulness and our prayers. In times of falling, may we all be carried in God's grace, forgiveness, compassion and care. May we continue to be a gathering of God's people that makes real God's presence, strength and love that no matter what, abides now, always.

Peter

# First Congregational Church

## October 2024



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> <b>Happy Birthday!</b> <b>Dottie Bailey</b>	<b>2</b> Pam out of office 6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- LP 7:00 PM-AA-FH	<b>3</b> <b>Happy Birthday!</b> <b>Dudley Bailey</b> 6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP 7:00 PM-AA-FH	<b>4</b> SLLC CLOSED 3:00 PM – Set up for bean supper Pastor's Sabbath	<b>5</b> <b>Ham &amp; Bean Supper</b> <b>5pm-7pm - FH</b> 7:00 PM-AA-LP
<b>6 Neighbors in Need Special Offering</b> 9:00 AM – Adult Bible Class – Major Prophets 10:00 AM- Worship Service <i>Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz</i>	<b>7</b> 7:00 PM – AA - FH	<b>8</b> 6:00PM – Eastern Star – FH	<b>9</b> 6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- LP 7:00 PM-AA-FH	<b>10</b> 6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP <b>Pastor Away</b> 7:00 PM-AA-FH	<b>11</b> <b>Pastor Away</b>	<b>12</b> 11-5 PM Eastern Star - FH <b>Pastor Away</b> 7:00 PM-AA-FH
<b>13</b> 9:00 AM – Adult Bible Class – Major Prophets 10:00 AM-Worship Service <i>Mary Menzies</i>	<b>14</b> <b>Pastor Away</b> OFFICE CLOSED SLLC CLOSED 5:30 PM – SLLC Board – CR & Zoom 7:00 PM – AA - FH	<b>15</b> <b>Pastor Away</b>	<b>16</b> <b>Pastor Away</b> 9:00 am – Noon Energy Audit 10:30 PM – Property Committee – CR 6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- LP 7:00 PM-AA-FH	<b>17</b> Noon – Council – FH 6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP 7:00 PM-AA-FH	<b>18</b> <b>Happy Birthday!</b> <b>Kathy Searles</b> 10:00 AM – Sharing Invitation - LP Pastor's Sabbath	<b>19</b> 11-5 PM Private Party - FH 7:00 PM-AA-FH
<b>20 Stewardship Sunday</b> 9:00 AM – Adult Bible Class – Major Prophets 10:00 AM-Worship Service <i>Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz</i> 6-8 PM – Marching Band practice - FH	<b>21</b> 7:00 PM – AA - FH	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> 6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- LP 7:00 PM – AA – FH	<b>24</b> 10:30 AM – Spinning Grp. - LP 6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP 7:00 PM-AA-FH	<b>25</b> <b>Happy Birthday!</b> <b>Geoff Krill</b> Pastor's Sabbath	<b>26</b> <b>Pumpkin Patch Hangout - FH</b> 2-5:30PM 7:00 PM-AA-FH
<b>27</b> <b>FOOD COLLECTION SUNDAY</b> 9:00 AM – Adult Bible Class – Major Prophets 10:00 AM-Worship Service <i>Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz</i> <i>Dani Allen, Guest Preacher</i>	<b>28</b> 7:00 PM – AA - FH	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> <b>Happy Birthday!</b> <b>Wendell Buffington</b> 6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- LP 7:00 PM – AA – FH	<b>31</b>  6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP 7:00 PM-AA-FH	<b>Happy Anniversary!</b> <b>Kim &amp; Tom Smith</b> Sunday, October 20 <sup>th</sup> ! Would you like your birthday and/or anniversary listed on the church calendar? Please contact Pam in the office if you would like to be included! Thank you!	

Wireless Guest Account  
 SSID: FCC Guests  
 Password: fcc189main  
 Enjoy!

**Financial Report**

August 31, 2024	YTD
Member support:	\$103,126
Scheduled w/d from trust funds	\$ 0
Other Income:	\$ 9,084
Total Income:	\$112,210
Total Expenses:	\$127,045
<b>Net:</b>	<b>-\$14,835</b>



**Saturday, October 5<sup>th</sup>**

## Ham and Bean Supper

*We welcome everyone to the table*  
 for a **Homemade Meal!**

Ham, baked beans, macaroni and cheese, coleslaw, rolls & butter, gingerbread and assorted drinks

*Suggested Donations:*  
**Adults/Teens: \$ 16.00    Children 4-12: \$6.00**  
**3 & under: Free**

**5 PM – 7:00 PM**  
*Continuous seating*

**First Congregational Church**  
 189 Main Street, Littleton



**Pumpkin Patch Hangout!**

The afternoon of **October 26<sup>th</sup>** to complement the main street trick-or-treating and before the *Gathering of the Jack O' Lanterns* event in the evening. Warm food and kid friendly activities are being planned.

Please see the sign-up sheet at the back of the sanctuary to find out what kind of help is needed to execute this **very popular event** in the community! **Donations of candy** are needed and new this year, a plea for **CASH!** Cash will be used to purchase the food items needed.  
*(Volunteers are in place this year to shop and make the food for us!)*



Please bring your **CANDY** and/or **CASH** donations to Church on Sundays or bring to the office.

## Fall Worship Series

**Sunday, October 6 – World Communion Sunday** The Golden Calf (Exodus 32:1-14)  
The Diversity Task Group will share plans for education and conversation as a congregation this fall.

*Special Offering for Neighbors in Need*, a United Church of Christ special mission offering that supports works of justice and compassion in the United States and abroad. Please see page eleven for more information.

**Sunday, October 13 – God Answers Hannah** (1 Samuel 1:9-11, 19-20, 2:1-10)

Mary, Worship Leader

We'll hear from Su Schott about how being part of the Diversity Task Group has impacted her faith.

**Sunday, October 20 – Stewardship Sunday** God's Promise to David (2 Samuel 7:1-17)

We'll have a opportunity to bring forward our financial gifts and pledges to support the ministry of the church in the coming year. The stewardship letter is on page 7.

**October 27 – Guest Preacher Dani Allen and New Member Joining Sunday!**

Dani Allen, Guest Preacher: Danielle (Dani) Allen has been married to Debbie Gline Allen for 37 years and they have two adult sons. Dani works as an engineer designing electronics and software for medical systems. She has been active at First Parish Congregational Church, UCC in East Derry, NH and the NH Conference UCC over the last 35 years. She also enjoys playing guitar and educating people about transgender issues. And join us after worship for a conversation with Dani.

*Monthly Offering for The Little Food Pantry* – bring your gifts of food and financial gifts to support our wider community.

**New Member Gatherings:** Sundays October 6 and 20: we'll gather after worship for conversation with all who might be interested in joining the church. If you have questions, talk with Mary, Lars or Peter!

## Our Mission Statement

*"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."*  
*Mathew 5:13-16*

This spring and summer the church council began discussing our church mission statement, that is, our WHY we are here at church. This was the first outcome of the work we have been doing to define "Who are we? Who is God calling us to be? and Who is our neighbor?". We all come to church for many different reasons, and often for some reason that we can't quite express. We have invited you to share your personal story in our "Why Church" moment at church which showed the beautiful variety and deep meaning this congregation finds in gathering as a faith community. Times change, people change, but God does not. A mission statement seeks to put into words what unites us in all of our diversity as God's particular people in this particular time and this particular place.

The council invited congregation members to join a small task group to shape a draft statement based on input from our retreats for the congregation to consider. Thanks to Dan Kiefer, Amy Greene, Kathy Searles, Kim Smith, and Bob Muh for your work!

Last month, they presented their proposal to church council:

**We unite to worship God and share Christ's love by caring for our wider community in a way that invites and inspires the gift of spiritual renewal.**

We'll have a chance to talk about this mission statement Sunday, October 6 in worship. The council plans to bring the mission statement to the congregation for a vote at our next church annual meeting. Our hope is that you will take time this fall to reflect on this new mission statement.

We invite you to join us in conversations on the ways this mission statement suggests how we need to organize leadership, direct energy, and focus our time, talents and resources for the church and the community in the coming years. We look forward to working together on these next steps!

For the church council,

Alice Muh, Moderator

## An Invitation for you:

**What:** Peter, Alice, and Dan would like to invite you to come for tea and cookies and a time of sharing your concerns, questions, and celebrations.

**When:** Friday, Oct. 18 at 10:00 am  
and/or Thursday, Nov. 7 at 10:00am

**Where:** Ladies' Parlor

**Why:** We have faced a lot of changes in the past four years- in the world, in our community, and in our church, not to mention ourselves. As a church we have faced Covid shutdowns, a pastor leaving, a year without a pastor, a prolonged search process for a new pastor, then finally calling a new pastor, albeit now part-time. We are not the same church we were 20 years ago, or even 10 or 5 years ago. Change is inevitable and often uncomfortable. We all respond to change differently.

This is a time to tell us how you feel about the changes you have experienced. What is hard to understand? What do you miss? We are listening.



# Stewardship

## Imagine Together

Dear Members and Friends,

It is that season of year when we take time to plan for our stewardship contributions for the coming year. Together we invite you to take time to imagine the present and future of our beloved church.

One of our most overlooked missions is our historic facility and talented staff.

**Imagine** what the greater Littleton community would be without our facility.

- No Shining Lights Daycare Center
- A place for four AA Meetings and an AlAnon group
- A place for many Musical Events
- No Little Free Pantry
- Fewer Community Dinners
- Fewer Church Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals
- No annual Boy Scout weekend visits for lodging
- No Pumpkin Patch Hangout outreach event
- Fewer options for residents and visitors seeking spiritual experiences/needs
- No place for our members and friends to gather for worship

**Imagine** what our church community would be without our dedicated and talented staff.

- A Pastor who guides and inspires us to carry out God's work
- A Pastor who is there for us in our time of need and celebration
- A Pastor who engages with the many social needs in our community
- An Office Manager who insures all of our administrative requirements are met with utmost efficiency
- An Office Manager who volunteers much of her time toward Church events
- A Music Director who enhances our worship experience with her exceptional talent
- A Music Director who inspires her choir members to achieve their best
- A Custodian who takes ultimate pride in the appearance of our facility
- A Custodian who volunteers his time and expertise in the needed facility projects

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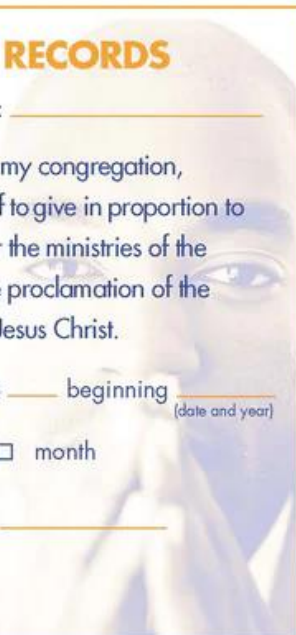
# Imagine Together

**Imagine** how our Church can remain and expand as a treasure and gift to ourselves and our community.

Below is a pledge card for your faithful and generous commitment to our 2025 operating budget. Cards are also available at the back of the sanctuary. Please complete and return to the church by mail or in person by November 1, 2024. You will also have the opportunity to bring your pledge cards to our Sunday service on **October 20<sup>th</sup> for Stewardship Sunday**.

With many blessings,

Your Finance Committee

<p>For <b>CHURCH RECORDS</b> Envelope # _____ (for office use)</p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____</p> <p>I plan to give \$ _____ each <input type="checkbox"/> week <input type="checkbox"/> month beginning _____</p> <p>for an annual total of \$ _____ (date and year)</p> <p>I understand that this commitment can be changed at any time by giving notice to the church officer.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I would like to talk with someone about including the church or church-related institution in my will.</p> <p>Signed: _____ Date: _____</p> <p><b>Imagine Together</b></p>	<p>For <b>YOUR RECORDS</b></p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>With others in my congregation, I commit myself to give in proportion to what I have for the ministries of the church and the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ.</p> <p>I plan to give \$ _____ beginning _____ (date and year)</p> <p>Each <input type="checkbox"/> week <input type="checkbox"/> month</p> <p>Annual Total \$ _____</p> 
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## Diversity Workgroup

The diversity workgroup was put together by the church council in the fall of 2022 after a member of the congregation approached Peter with questions and concerns about his being a gay pastor. This person did not think the congregation had been sufficiently notified of this decision and did not have time to talk about calling a pastor who is gay. Fortunately, this person did feel comfortable speaking with Peter and came to the next church council meeting and shared their concerns. The council formed a workgroup to offer opportunities for the congregation to learn and study what the Bible has to say about sexuality. The council members on the committee are Linda Warden and Tina Peabody. Su Schott also joined the committee.

At our first meeting we determined that while we knew some of the words that are used to talk about sexuality and gender, we didn't know all of them and did not know their meanings. Thus we spent the first year finding information which defined all of the words used in defining or discussing LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) persons. We have many brochures and booklets that assisted us in this process which are available for any to borrow. In the spring we held discussions after church to meet and discuss with any that were interested the terms and also our personal feelings and experiences with LGBTQ people.

As we ended the sessions we asked what our next steps should be. It was determined that we needed to learn more about how and why we should accept LGBTQ people when there are instances in the Bible which seem to specifically prohibit such behavior. With the help of the book: The Good Book by Peter J. Gomes, we explored this topic. We discussed that there are many things prohibited in the Bible which we do and don't question (for instance divorce) and we wondered why some sexual prohibitions are held so strongly by some. We found that many of the reasons were historical based on the society of two thousand plus years ago. We found this a difficult book to read but that discussion helped us better understand. By this time June Davis had joined our group.

This fall we are exploring why we might become an "open and affirming" church and how the congregation feels about this step. To assist with that process, the diversity workgroup is offering the following chances for conversation and dialogue.

On October 7 Linda, Su and Tina will talk about the work of the diversity workgroup and next steps this fall.

October 14 Su will share how being part of the diversity workgroup has impacted her.

October 27 Dani Allen will preach on Acts 8:26-39. After worship, we'll have a chance to talk with Dani about her experience as a trans woman. The transgender community has been much in the news of late and this is a great opportunity to come and learn.

November 17 Jay Sprout will join us and share his experience with the North Congregational Church in St. Johnsbury becoming open and affirming. How did that process and decision affect their community and their connections with the wider community?

*Continued next page*

## Diversity Workgroup (Cont.)

On December 8 we'll have an opportunity to shape a statement together on being an open and affirming congregation. We'll talk about how that differs from "just" being welcoming with the idea of moving a motion on a proposed statement from the congregation at the annual meeting in February.

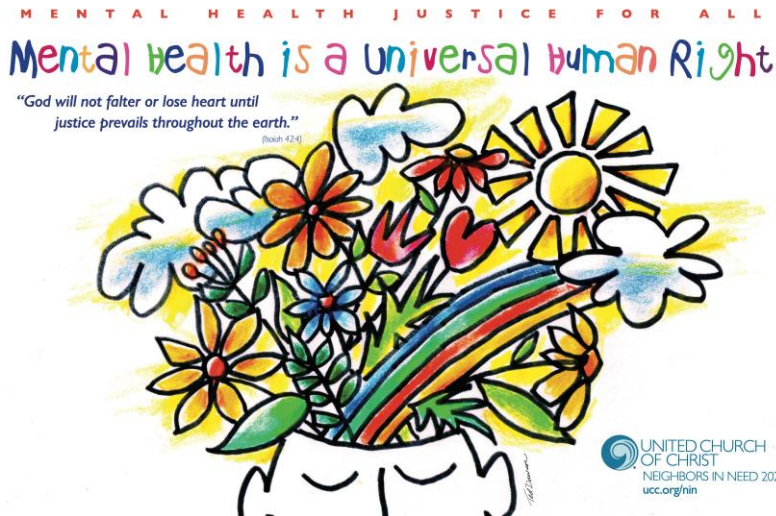
Do let us know if you have any questions and if you'd like to talk with us more about this process and next steps.

Su Schott  
Linda Warden  
June Davis  
Tina Peabody

## Worship at Horton Center September 29<sup>th</sup>



## Special Offering October 6<sup>th</sup>



In 2024, the **Neighbors in Need** theme is “Mental Health Justice For All!” This year’s focus is on Mental Health Justice. In 2015, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ passed a resolution to become WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged) for mental health.

A just world for all is a world where the human rights and well-being of people with mental health challenges are respected, no matter who you are or where you are in life’s mental health journey.

Please join us in promoting this year’s NIN “Mental Health is a Universal Human Right” campaign!

One-third of the offering supports Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Two-thirds are used by Justice and Witness Ministries to provide grants to UCC churches and organizations as well as supporting a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects.



### A new season of **Dinner Bell**

On September 17<sup>th</sup>, Cynthia Nielson headed the first FCC hosted Dinner Bell of the season. Sixty meals were served and an additional 30 take-home meals were provided. Thank you to all who made or brought food, volunteered or donated money to help with expenses! The meal consisted of pulled pork sandwiches, mac & cheese, coleslaw and desserts!

**November 26<sup>th</sup>** – *Thanksgiving meal ~ all churches and organizations participate*

**2025: January 7<sup>th</sup> and May 6<sup>th</sup>**

Dinner Bell has resumed sit down meals at the All Saints’ Church until June. Take-out meals are also available for those who request it. We will be planning on serving 80-100 people on the dates above.

## Church Happenings



Amy Greene was awarded a generous scholarship from Eastern Star to support her studies in ministry back in August. Congratulations, Amy!



## Shining Lights Learning Center



Jesus heals our heart project

Enrollment is up to 23! There are some preschool slots open (infant and toddler rooms are at capacity). Topics for October include apples, acorns, sunflowers, pinecones, pumpkins and of course Halloween!

## Community Happenings

**Caring for our Wider Community and Friends at Bethlehem Hebrew Congregation: Two important events coming up this month that can show our care for our wider community and neighbors.**

**Let Peter know if you'd like to carpool to either event:**

**Sunday, October 6, 4PM: A commemoration of Oct 7th at Bethlehem Hebrew Congregation (39 Strawberry Hill Road).** "This will very intentionally not be a religious service, instead it will attempt to acknowledge -- through live music, several new rituals, and some silence -- the enormity of the tasks ahead of everyone with a stake in that part of the world: to act with humanity and with an energetic sense that a viable future for all is possible there."

**Tuesday, October 22, Noon: "A lunchtime event in the synagogue's communal *sukkah* during the Fall holiday of Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles, for a little studying and a simple meal together in fellowship.** In case of inclement weather, the rain date will be the following day, Wednesday, October 23. There's nothing quite like sitting inside/outside -- inside an insubstantial-by-design structure while also sitting outdoors in fall weather -- a yearly reminder, both pleasant and stark, of the innate fragility of security." I attended this wonderful gathering last year and I'd love to have you join me this year!

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

# **STEEPLE MINUTE**

## **OCTOBER 2024**



### **Steeple Minute**

A brief newsletter of the  
First Congregational Church  
of Littleton

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[www.1stconglittleton.org](http://www.1stconglittleton.org)

#### **Church Staff**

Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz, Pastor  
Office Manager: 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: Tim Gould  
Property Management: Laurie Boswell

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

Board Chair: Suzanne Schott  
Director: Vanessa Neuroth

