

Steeple Minute

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

March 1, 2024

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Issue 3

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Thank you all for coming to our annual meeting. It is an important event in the life of our church. The annual meeting serves, not only to take care of the business of the church, but to remind us of our obligations to this church, our community, to the world, and to God. True to the Congregational way, it gives everyone a voice in how we accomplish this as church. You will find a summary of the annual meeting on page 4.

In fellowship with each other and God, the church council has the privilege and responsibility to carry out these promises and to guide our congregation in the coming year. On February 18, 2024, the church council met once again in the All Saint's Church parlor for our first retreat of the year. We have been using this in-depth time during these retreats to step away from the distractions of our daily life and to immerse ourselves in the questions – Who are we? Who is our neighbor? And who is God calling us to become in this time and in this place? We all know the First Congregational Church of Littleton is quite different than it was 20 years ago, even 10 years ago just as our community, nation or the world is not the same as it was. This requires us to re-examine the above questions. After each retreat we have come up with goals that will hopefully lead us closer to the ultimate question of why our church is here and how we can best serve our community. As we ponder these questions, more questions arise such as why we belong to a church and why others do not. We took time to evaluate the goals we had set up last year that were to equip and empower lay leadership, expand communication and outreach with the wider community, and embark on a community needs assessment. Our next retreat will focus on “Finding our Why” using a resource that Pastor Peter brings to us. Our hope is that, through this work we are doing, we can refine our mission statement and better understand who we are in Christ. From that it will become clearer how we can right size and reorganize our governance structure so that we can better live out our mission. We are hoping you will join us.

The NH Conference, UCC put on their annual “Prepared to Serve” on February 24, 2024. We had six members attend! It was a day filled with thought provoking presentations, moments of ‘Yes! We do that!’ (or “I could have taught that session”), many learning opportunities, and gathering in community. Once again, I have learned that we are not alone. Our siblings in Christ are all around us and are going through much the same as we are. Meeting together builds connections as well as sharing ideas and resources. See more on page 7. Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) contributions are what help pay for events such as this, among other good things. The funds support the conference so that it can, in turn, bring resources to support local churches in their sharing of the Good News of Christ's redeeming love. I would encourage our church to reconsider our contribution to OCWM as a mission supporting God's work on a larger scale. Look up, not down. Look out, not in. Step out, not back. Keep asking, “‘why?’ or ‘why not?’”.


May God bless all of you this Lenten season and into our celebration of Holy Week and Christ's resurrection.

Alice Muh, Moderator

First Congregational Church

March 2024



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| KEY: FH - Fellowship Hall LP - Ladies Parlor CR - Classroom | | |  | | 1 WORLD DAY OF PRAYER Pastor's Sabbath | 2 7:00 PM-AA-LP |
| 3 THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT 9:00 AM – Adult Bible Class – Minor Prophets 10:00 AM-Worship Service 11:45 AM – Adult Bible Study – The Good Book – CR & Zoom <i>Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz</i> | 4 1:00 PM – Community Assessment - LP 7:00 PM – AA - FH | 5 | 6 Happy Birthday! Elizabeth Edney 6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- FH 7:00 PM-AA-LP | 7 6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP 7:00 PM-AA-FH | 8 Pastor's Sabbath | 9 Happy Birthday! Glenda Iles Pastor Away 7:00 PM-AA-LP |
| 10 FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT 9:00 AM – Adult Bible Class – Minor Prophets 10:00 AM-Worship Service 11:45 AM – Adult Bible Study – The Good Book – CR & Zoom TBD <i>One Great Hour of Sharing Special Offering</i> | 11 5:30 PM – SLLC BOD - Zoom Pastor Away 7:00 PM – AA - FH | 12 6:00PM – Eastern Star – FH Pastor Away | 13 1:00 PM – Finance – CR 6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- FH 7:00 PM-AA-LP | 14 6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP Pam out of Office Pastor Away 7:00 PM-AA-FH | 15 Pastor Away | 16 Pastor Away 7:00 PM-AA-LP |
| 17 FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT 9:00 AM – Adult Bible Class – Minor Prophets 10:00 AM-Worship Service 11:45 AM – Adult Bible Study – The Good Book – CR & Zoom <i>Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz</i> | 18 7:00 PM – AA - FH | 19 | 20 6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- FH 7:00 PM-AA-LP | 21 9:30 AM – Council-CR/Zoom 11:30 AM – Property – CR 6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP 7:00 PM-AA-FH | 22 Happy Anniversary! Alison & Ron Bolt Pastor's Sabbath | 23 Happy Birthday! Pam Nute 7:00 PM-AA-LP |
| 24 PALM SUNDAY 9:00 AM – Adult Bible Class – Minor Prophets 10:00 AM-Worship Service 11:30 AM - Cake Walk <i>Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz</i> | 25 Happy Birthday! Roberta Lavoie 7:00 PM – AA - FH | 26 | 27 6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- FH Pastor's Sabbath 7:00 PM-AA-LP | 28 MAUNDY THURSDAY 6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP 6:00 PM – Maundy Thursday Potluck supper – Shared Ministry, Lisbon 7:00 PM-AA-FH | 29 GOOD FRIDAY SLLC CLOSED 6:00 PM – Good Friday service – Community Church of Christ, Franconia | 30 7:00 PM-AA-LP |
| 31 EASTER SUNDAY Sunrise Service: TBD 10:00 AM-Worship Service <i>Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz</i> | | | | | | |

Financial Report

| January 31, 2024 | YTD |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Member support: | \$14,872 |
| Scheduled w/d from trust funds | \$ 0 |
| Other Income: | \$ 681 |
| Total Income: | \$15,553 |
| Total Expenses: | \$15,090 |
| Net: | \$ 463 |

Wireless Guest Account

SSID: FCC Guests

Password: fcc189main

The Caring Tree

Do let Elaine Pollak, Rachel Clark and Karen Lord know how our “Caring Tree” ministry of cards, connection, and prayer can be there for you and hold your prayers.

Ed O’Brien has his old phone number back at his new home in the Taylor Community in Laconia. The church is so important to him and he’d love to hear from you! 603-524-0285.

Asteroids, Stars and the Love of God” The Solar Eclipse is Coming to the North Country on Monday, April 8! The skies will begin to darken at 2:14 PM with a total eclipse just north of us in Lancaster and St. Johnsbury at 3:28pm. The Littleton Chamber of Commerce has been preparing for crowds of visitors. What might we do to welcome and engage them that weekend? Let Peter know if you’d like to make something happen! To peak your imagination, here’s a fascinating conversation on life, faith and the universe with Father George Coyne and Brother Buy Consolmagno, astronomers at the Vatican Observatory: <https://onbeing.org/programs/guy-consolmagno-george-coyne-asteroids-stars-and-the-love-of-god/>



Special Offering March 10, 2024

Share the Light

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.

A Brief Recap of the 221st Annual Business Meeting – February 4, 2024

Alice Muh reconvened the meeting at 11:25am after a short break after worship. It was established that there were enough members present for a quorum (20 members). Alice reminded everyone that the two members attending by Zoom were able to cast votes.

Pastor's Report: Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz summed up his report in two words; joy and thanks!

Dan Kiefer reported that the church financial reporting is always open for anyone to review anytime of the year and that even though there are always up and downs, overall for 2023, finances and the trust are in good shape. Dan also reported that Ken Kinder of Stifel Nicolaus, investment advisor, was in attendance for any questions, but would be giving Ken a break this year from giving a report. Dan assured the congregation they were in good hands. Alice thanked the community for coming together to make sure all bills and staff were paid in 2023 and reminded everyone that the church budget wasn't modeled after a corporation but rather a faith-based enterprise!

The 2024 proposed budget was presented: \$177,800 in income and \$213,000 in expenses for a deficit of \$35,200. Phil Krill reported that the congregation is facing another Fill the Gap campaign in 2024. The finance committee will continue to commit to be as transparent as possible and check in weekly with the congregation during the service on Sundays.

Phil gave an update on the 30 year old sanctuary boiler that needs replacement. The cost is not reflected in the 2024 budget because it was decommissioned after the budget was completed. There are two quotes \$38,000 and \$29,500 so far and the property committee will make sure the quotes are "apple to apples". Other options than oil have and will be explored. Most likely funds to replace the sanctuary boiler will come from the trust as there are no other resources at this date. Laurie reported that a \$2,500 Sacred Spaces grant has been awarded for the past two years and that an application for another would be done in 2024.

Laurie then introduced the idea of getting an AED for the building. A motion to amend the budget was recommended by the property committee and made by Laurie to increase the 2024 budget by \$2,000 to purchase one AED unit. The amendment was approved by majority vote.

Mary Menzies mad a motion to approve the 2024 budget as amended. Tim Gould seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and the motion was passed by majority vote.

After a review of the current church officers, (same as 2023) Alice and Dan reported that the current committee and task force structure is not fulfilling current needs and they will be working with each committee in the upcoming year to discern different ways they can work better to serve the church. This will be a work in progress and thanks was given to people already serving on committees and task forces. The Search Committee is closing now that Peter has been called as the Designated Term Pastor. The Community Outreach Group (COG) has also been formally disbanded.

Laurie Boswell made a motion to approve the 2023 Annual Report as written. Emily LaFlam seconded, there was no discussion and all were in favor to approve.

Other business included Bob Muh and Laurie Boswell committing to a fundraising dinner in 2024. Alice encouraged anyone wanting to do a fundraiser to bring it to council and do it! Kim Smith suggested we look at our gifts and offer them. Have a tiny idea? She suggested talking to other people in church and to bring it to the table. Who knows where it will go from there!

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 pm.

Holy Week March 24-March 31

The Season of Lent concludes with Holy Week and this year we are delighted to be partnering with our friends and neighbors as we bring the stories of the week to life.

Palm Sunday - Sunday, March 24: Join our Shining Lights Preschoolers, Parents and Community for a “Cake Walk” after worship today and a most delicious way to support our Shining Lights Preschool ministry!

Maundy Thursday - Thursday, March 28 at 6:00pm at Lisbon Landaff Federated Church: We are carpooling to join our friends at the Shared Ministry of Lisbon-Bath for a potluck supper and communion as we remember and mark the Last Supper together. Rev. Lyn Winter shares:

Maundy Thursday at the Shared Ministry is a simple potluck -- 'simple' can be just that (we used to do just vegetarian fruits/grains but too many of us had to eat when we got home, lol)...and there will be plenty if empty handed). So whatever anyone wants to contribute: Only rule is, no desserts. We'll have coffee and waters, so no worries on beverages either.

We share the meal and one of the Passover and/or other readings, with food and some fellowship, all downstairs in our meeting room. When the meal is ended we go up to the candlelit Sanctuary for a simple liturgy of prayer, hymn, reading and common cup (tincture) communion.

Anyone and everyone welcome to come embrace the significance of that last supper and first communion ~ Thursday, March 28 at 6:00 pm. 49 South Main Street, Lisbon (the big white church). We hope you'll join us! We'll meet to carpool over together at 5:30pm.

Good Friday - Friday, March 29 at 6:00pm at the Community Church of Christ in Franconia: We are making worship together tonight with our ecumenical church friends and neighbors as we remember Good Friday. We'll meet here at the church and carpool over together at 5:30 pm.

Easter Sunday - Sunday, March 31: Join us for an outdoor Sunrise Service with our friends at First United Methodist (time and place coming soon!) And join us here on Sunday morning at 10am for a special Easter Sunday and coffee hour. A great time to invite friends and family to join you! (My family will be here too!)



“Am I the Right Person?” On a drive recently, Peter listened to the podcast in the link below from the BTS Center (Bangor Theological Seminary Center). In it, Margaret Wheatley, an icon in organizational management, shares her perspective on living in the present storms of our time and Debra Rienstra, author of *Refugia Faith* (which we used for our Lenten study last year) offers her response and reflections. The conversation offers some powerful and provocative perspectives on the importance of the small church community in our times and the role we all can play in strengthening relationships with and connections to one another and the earth. So, for any of you up for a **Lenten challenge**, here's the link below to the 45-minute podcast. Warning: The first 5 minutes with Margaret Wheatley are downright bleak as she shares her perspective on the realities of where we are as a planet and where we are going. But stay with it! He thinks you might be moved and inspired like he was the other day! Peter would love to hear your thoughts! Here's the link:

<https://thebtscenter.org/climate-changed/podcast-season-two-episode-5/>

CAKE WALK

March 24th after the service

Please join us in the fellowship hall for the cake walk!

Plans are underway to hold the annual cake walk after the service on Palm Sunday. Yes! The space is challenging now that Sunday service is being held in the fellowship hall, but we will make it work! A cake walk is a fun event for all ages. Donate \$1 each round to walk around a circle on numbers while music is playing (or watch!). Once the music stops, everyone stops on a number and someone picks a number from a basket. Whoever's number is picked gets to choose a cake to bring home! Several rounds are played.

Benefitting Shining Lights Learning Center!



Worship in Lent: “A Wandering Heart”

During Lent we are following the Disciple Peter through the Gospel Stories. Each Sunday we are gathering in small groups to engage a question that connects the Gospel message to our lives. If you have joining us on-line, we hope you'll join our Zoom conversation with other on-line members. During the sermon break-out time, open the zoom link to join the conversation:

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86002238147?pwd=dkovcDV1YXN5Y0VrdnRFVHlScGY1dz09>

Lenten Bible Study: “The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart”: Our Bible Study on Biblical Interpretation based on Peter Gomes’ The Good Book continues during Lent. We’ve had great conversations as we’ve learned about how and why Biblical interpretation has been challenged and changed on conversations among Christians on slavery, race and Judaism. We are meeting each Sunday March 3-17 at 11:45-1:15. Many thanks to Su Schott, Dan Kiefer, Linda Warden, June Davis and Elizabeth Edney for leading our conversations!

We’ve all been learning a lot!

March 3: The Bible and Women

March 10: The Bible and Homosexuality

March 17: The Bible and Gender

Below is the link to join us on zoom if you can’t be there in person.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81649723192?pwd=Ujl4QXN3WUVHYkFIZVhoVS9FSUVJQT09>

Wisdom Down the Road: Prepared to Serve: Curran, Pam, Laurie, Mary, Alice and Peter attended the “Prepared to Serve” Workshop Day of the New Hampshire Conference on February 25th: Here’s a few of our take-aways from the workshops they attended:

- “Joy comes for me in working together to build something new.” (Curran, in his reflection for opening worship! See next page, we got pictures!)
- Dance is how joy looks in Africa.
- Family Homelessness: Did you know the average age of a homeless person is 11?
- "Family Promise" is a national organization that helps link churches together to each provide a week of housing support for three unhoused families at a time. For such a monumental crisis, that doesn't seem like a lot of help and yet it's got to be better than nothing! At least there is a way that is trying to take a small bite out of a BIG challenge. Can we do that? What's it going to take to meet this housing crisis?
- Lots of “what if’s” to share from a workshop on creative worship: Look into the “Season of Creation” in September and “The Voice” translation of the Bible which turns the Bible into a script!
- What if we offered an interfaith community blessing of animals for St. Francis Day on October 4?
- A moving testimony by Rev. Renee Manning, a UCC pastor who is trans. Why is there such fear, anxiety and hatred towards people who are trans or nonbinary? Where does that come from? How might we help meet those fears by getting to know people like Renee?
- In a workshop on “Aging Gracefully” Rev. Linda Fraser reminded us: “Be aware of what is happening to you. Don’t let it cripple you. Do all you can while you can and then do something else!”
- What if we went on a road trip together to hear UCC General Minister and President The Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson preaches on Sunday, April 7 at 5pm at Brookside Church in Manchester. I know you’ll be inspired! (Sponsored by the Anti-Racism Ministry Group in the Conference.).
- Prepared to Serve message: There are many other churches going through the same things that we are and "in the same boat".
- Having lots of company in the boat is no reason to stay there.
- Taming Your Church’s Energy Bills: Our church is asking the same questions and facing similar challenges with regards to reducing our energy bills. Old churches are challenging, and more so if they are in historic districts or designated historic.
- Our Call to the Gospel When Trans People are Being Demonized and Attacked: Being an open and welcoming church is a small step. Open and affirming is a next step, *and* it needs to be more than a label. What is God calling our church (and me) to do?
- How to Expand Your Ministry's Reach with ChatGPT: (From Laurie) “WOW!! I have a clearer and less fearful way of thinking about artificial intelligence. Lively discussion and an abundance of ideas for using ChatGPT in bible study, sermon preparation, social media, and personal work.”
- Freedom From Plastic Pollution: General Synod ('23) passed a resolution to reduce plastic pollution. There were good suggestions to reduce plastic pollution, along with a discussion of current legislation in NH.
- From a workshop on “Best Financial Practices”: **"We've got this!!"**
- “Listening to the Holy Spirit” (a workshop on discernment): **Treasure the "weird stuff"** and keep reframing the (yes or no) question you are wondering on. The original question may morph!

It's Curran!!



Starring Kristjar Nielson in *Blythe Spirit!*



Superstar, Tina Peabody



First Congregational Church killing it on the slopes!

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Return Service Requested

STEEPLE MINUTE

MARCH 2024



Steeple Minute

A brief newsletter of the
First Congregational Church
of Littleton

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www.1stconglittleton.org

Church Staff

Rev. Peter Igenfritz, 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:
Property Management: Laurie Boswell

Shining Lights Learning Center

Board Chair: Suzanne Schott
Director: Melissa Kam

