

# Steeple Minute

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

April 1, 2025

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Issue 4

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## Beauty in the Broken

After a week of hearing nothing, I got a text message on Saturday evening that my friend Marcia had moved to hospice care and was dying. Ever since last fall when she'd been diagnosed with lung cancer, I'd been calling her once, twice a week to check in. In a time when there was nothing to "do", to make it all better, here was something I could do. But the last time we'd spoken was a week ago and I'd received no response to my texts and phone messages. I was so relieved to hear from her friends on that Saturday night and knew that I wanted to go to say goodbye to my friend of 35 years.

And like all goodbyes, I wanted to go and oh, I didn't want to go. I didn't want Marcia to die much as I knew how sick she was. I didn't want to feel the grief I already anticipated feeling and felt. I flew out on Monday and arrived in Marcia's hospice room late that afternoon. All day her room had been filled with many visitors who had come by to say goodbye. Last minute conversations and duties took place that hadn't been done before. Friends helped her put together a will that weekend and she signed it on Monday. The minister from her church talked with her about her wishes for a memorial service. She'd had a long day and after sharing a hug, she lay back in bed and said, "I am so tired." I held her hand as she dozed off and texted friends that I had arrived.

Marcia had asked if I had a place to stay and although I had planned on finding a nearby hotel, she offered that I could stay here on the couch in her hospice room. It ended up being right where I needed to be that night. After one last visitor, the hospice caregivers and nurses came in to make her more comfortable and asked if she wanted to have anything to help her breathe better and sleep. After refusing any pain medicine or morphine all day, Marcia said, "Yes." I imagine that she knew that the drugs would keep her from being present with all of us visitors that day and the important conversations she needed to have. But now, yes, she wanted to rest and sleep. She was ready to die. Every two hours I woke up to Marcia's labored breathing and fidgeting in bed. I called the wonderful night nurse Rizelle who came in and always asked Marcia if she wanted any pain medicine. While Marcia couldn't speak at this point, she'd mumble a yes. 10pm, midnight, 2am, 4am, 6am like clockwork, I'd wake up to her restlessness and Rizelle would come in.

Early Tuesday morning it was clear that her death was not long away. I called her friends and they were on the way. Another early morning visitor who felt she needed to come by one last time arrived. Kensey and I sat and talked by Marcia's bedside, a hand on her arm. We stepped out of the room for a moment so I could call one of her friends on the way to let her know that I thought Marcia would like her minister to come by now as well. When we stepped back into the room, Marcia had died. It happens often, Rizelle told us later, sometimes people just need a little space and quiet to step into their death.

*Continued on Page 4*

# First Congregational Church

## April 2025



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>KEY:</b> <b>FH - Fellowship Hall</b> <b>LP - Ladies Parlor</b> <b>CR - Classroom</b>		1	2 8:30 AM – Bible Study & Prayer - Zoom 6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- LP 7:00 PM-AA-FH	3 6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP 7 :00 PM-AA-FH	4 SLLC Closed	5 Noon- Private Party - FH 7:00 PM-AA-FH
<b>6 FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT</b> 9:00 AM – Adult Bible Class - Lenten Series 10:00 AM-Worship Service <i>Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz</i>	7 11:00 AM – Aging discussion grp. - LP 7:00 PM – AA - FH	8 6:00 PM – SLLC BOD - Zoom 6:00PM – Eastern Star – FH	9 8:30 AM – Bible Study & Prayer - Zoom 6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- LP 7:00 PM-AA-FH	10 6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP 7 :00 PM-AA-FH	11 Pastor's Sabbath	12 7:00 PM-AA-FH
<b>13 PALM SUNDAY</b> 9:00 AM – Adult Bible Class - Lenten Series 10:00 AM-Worship Service <i>Mary Menzies</i> 11:30 AM - <b>CAKE WALK</b> -FH	14 7:00 PM – AA - FH	15	16 8:30 AM – Bible Study & Prayer - Zoom 6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- LP 7:00 PM – AA – FH	<b>17 Maundy Thursday</b> Noon – Council – LP - Zoom 5:30 PM – Maundy Service – Lisbon Shared Ministry 6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP 7 :00 PM-AA-FH	<b>18 GOOD FRIDAY</b> SLLC Closed 6:00 PM – First United Methodist Church Service	19 6:00 PM – Easter Vigil Service – All Saints Church 7:00 PM-AA-FH
<b>20 EASTER</b> 6:00 AM – Sunrise Service Sunset Hill House 9:00 AM – Adult Bible Class - Lenten Series 10:00 AM-Worship Service <i>Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz</i>	21 11:00 AM – Aging discussion grp. - LP 7:00 PM – AA - FH	22 Pastor Away	23 8:30 AM – Bible Study & Prayer - Zoom 6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- LP 7:00 PM – AA – FH	24 6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP 7 :00 PM-AA-FH	25 Pastor Away	26 Pastor Away 7:00 PM-AA-FH
<b>27 SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER</b> <b>FOOD COLLECTION SUNDAY</b> 9:00 AM – Adult Bible Class <i>Dan Kiefer</i> 10:00 AM-Worship Service 6:00PM – Marching Band Practice – FH	28 Pastor Away 7:00 PM – AA - FH	29	30 8:30 AM – Bible Study & Prayer - Zoom 6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- LP 7:00 PM – AA – FH	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Happy Birthday!</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Bob Oleary (9<sup>TH</sup>)</b>  <b>Curran Smith AND David Boyle (13<sup>TH</sup>)</b>  <b>Su Schott (17<sup>TH</sup>)</b>  <b>Chris Sundman (30<sup>TH</sup>)</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Please be sure to let Pam know if you would like your birthday and/or anniversary included!</p>		

**Financial Report**

February 28, 2025	YTD
Member support:	\$28,657
Scheduled w/d from trust funds	\$ 0
Other Income:	\$ 3,672
Total Income:	\$32,329
Total Expenses:	\$35,780
<b>Net:</b>	<b>\$ -3,451</b>

**Nature’s Calling:**  
**Saturday, April 26 at 10:00am** at Ski Hearth Farm (392 Streeter Pond Road, Sugar Hill) A simple gathering with our wider community to listen, take in and share the gifts and mysteries of nature we encounter and perceive in a beautiful setting! Talk to Peter for more information.

**A Conversation on Compassion and Resilience: Tuesday, April 8, 5:30-7:00pm, in the Ladies Parlor**

Come join our small group with members of the wider community to talk about drawing strength for the uncertainties and challenges of the present day with practices of compassion and resilience.

**Love in Action: Support for our Children and Their Families**

We are so blessed to have an intergenerational community of faith that includes some great elders and wonderful growing children and their families! The next few weeks we’ll be taking a next step in providing a safe and caring worshipping space for all by providing a Children’s Space at the front of the sanctuary for children to have some supervised space and activities to share in during worship. As we learn with our children and their parents about what can best serve their growing and changing needs, we thank everyone for your support and helping us continue to grow as a community of faith that seeks to make a safe, caring, welcoming space for all our various needs and a non-anxious presence for all. For sure we won’t do it perfectly, but it is a gift to be doing it together for the sake of being together as the Body of Christ. If you’d like to join our little team of parents and church members to help out with our next steps of being support to our children and their families, contact Kim Smith! Thank you!

**Save the Date!**

Following the White Mountain Voices concert here on **Sunday, May 18<sup>th</sup>** (concert at 3pm) the church will be hosting a buffet fundraising dinner in the hall.

**Pam will be posting more information soon at the back of the sanctuary. Food (or money to purchase food) and help wanted!**

*Continued from cover page*

Kensey and I stood by her bed for a few minutes and then I walked down the hall to let the nurses know that Marcia had died. “This might seem strange to say,” one of the aides said, “but Marcia had a good death.” Yes, she had. The aides and nurses reached into a bag and sprinkled rose petals on the beautiful bright blanket that covered Marcia the last few days with names, prayers, and blessings scribbled from so many friends in life and at church. We reached into the bag and sprinkled rose petals as well. “There is no rush, take the time you need,” they reminded us.

The other friends and minister arrived. The minister lay his hand on Marcia’s head and said a prayer. And then we sat, for an hour and a half or so together. “This is a most interesting gathering,” her friend Doug, reflected, “Someone speaks and then we are quiet. And someone else speaks, and then someone laughs, and we are quiet again.” We filled the room with silence, with stories, memories, so much love. And then it was time to go, we’d done what we needed to do.

Marcia and her husband Wes, who died three years previously, showed each of us all so much about the way of love. They showed me that “perfect love” is in fact messy love, incomplete and longing love, love full of open arms and silence and boisterous laughter and wet tears, the kind of love that filled our little space that morning at Marcia’s bedside. So much grief because there had been so much love.

It’s spring in the North Country and Nature wants to share its Love in an embrace of the muddy and messy. A love full of fits and starts, of warm blue sky one day and snowfall and howling winds the next. It can be a hard way of love to embrace but perhaps the best kind of love that makes space and room for the Spring yet unseen to bud.

In a few weeks I’ll fly back to Chicago to share in a remembrance at Marcia’s memorial. In a time when there is nothing I could possibly say to speak of what a friendship of 35 years has meant, I can speak of those last 16 hours with her and what being with her taught me about the gifts of love – of presence, community, a love that holds and is real, a messy love and a good death when there is time to say and show one more time, I love you.

Peter

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## Worship in April:

**Sunday, April 6** - Fifth Sunday of Lent: Zacchaeus and The Tree (Luke 18:31-19:10) We’ll celebrate communion today. Thank you Lars for being our worship leader with Peter today.

**Sunday, April 13** - Sixth Sunday of Lent: Palm Sunday (Luke 19:29-44). Start off Holy Week with a special service to mark Palm Sunday! Thank you Mary for being our worship leader today!

*Holy Week Schedule on Page 5*

## Holy Week Special Services:

The Season of Lent concludes with Holy Week and this year we are again delighted and blessed to partner with our ecumenical friends and neighbors to share in bringing the stories of the week to life.

**Maundy Thursday, April 17, 6:00pm** at Lisbon Landaff Federated Church (49 South Main Street - the big white church). Meet at First Congregational at 5:30pm to carpool or call Peter if you'd like to be picked up and get a ride. We'll join our friends in the Shared Ministry of Lisbon-Bath for a potluck supper and communion as we remember and mark the Last Supper together. Bring anything you'd like to share for the potluck - except dessert! We'll share our potluck meal with some readings and when the meal is ended go up to the candlelit sanctuary for a simple liturgy of prayers, hymns, readings and communion.

**Good Friday, April 18, 6:00pm** - We'll gather this year at First United Methodist in Littleton for an ecumenical service of readings and reflections to mark this day of Jesus' crucifixion.

**Easter Vigil Service, Saturday, April 19, 7:00pm** - All Saints Episcopal Church welcomes our ecumenical community to join them for a special service and communion that recalls some of the major stories in the Biblical narrative leading up to Holy Week. It's a beautiful service and special way to mark Easter together.

**Easter Sunrise Service, Sunset Hill House in Sugar Hill, April 20, 6am** - Join Community Church of Christ in Franconia and our ecumenical community for an outdoor worship service to celebrate Easter Sunday. Coffee to follow!

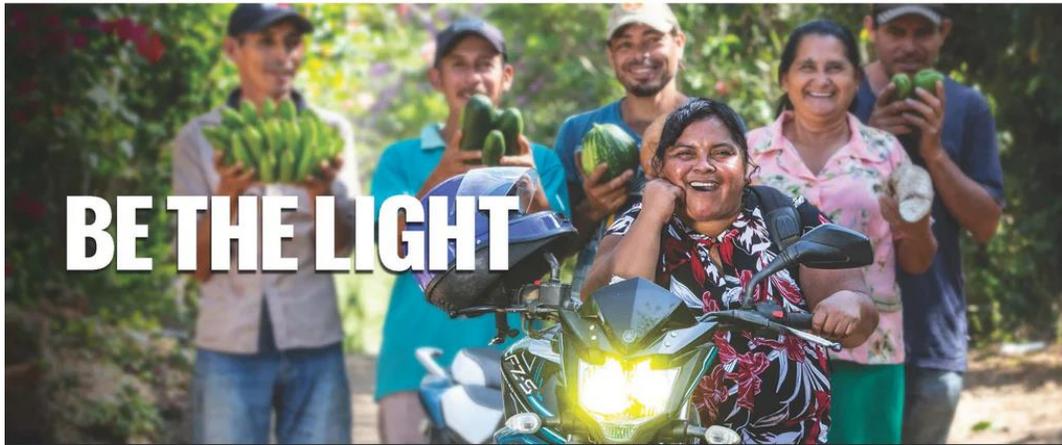
**Easter Sunday, 10am** - Invite your family and friends to join us to celebrate a special Easter Sunday with us! (Luke 24:1-12) The sanctuary will be abloom with beautiful Lilies to celebrate and remember our loved ones.

**Sunday, April 27 - First Sunday of Eastertide: The Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)** Today is our Monthly Special Offering for the Little Free Pantry - Bring your financial gifts and/or food contributions to share!

**Church Fans enjoying Curran and Brayden in the production of the Wizard of Oz!**



**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 ongoing recovery.



Through your support, OGHS funds comprehensive development programs in areas such as healthcare, education, agriculture, food security, microfinancing, and women's empowerment. By partnering with Global Ministries and international response networks, OGHS maximizes its impact. Your contributions help meet urgent needs while addressing the root causes of vulnerability, ensuring long-term, sustainable solutions for affected communities.

**Due to no in person worship on 3/30, this Special Offering is extended to April 13<sup>th</sup> ~ Thank You!!**



**Bible Study and Prayer: Wednesday Mornings – 8:30-9:15am – on Zoom:** Join us each week for a chance to learn and talk together about an upcoming scripture in our Sunday morning worship service.

Join Zoom Meeting: Lenten Bible Study Wednesday Mornings

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85447221746?pwd=DgeZr6nocjmpln0bb4arss3m8UHYwaM.1>

**Conversations on Aging – Monday Mornings at 11am April 7 and 21: Come join us every other week for what's been a lively and fun conversation on the joys and challenges of aging!** A challenge before our next meeting – Step out of your comfort zone and make a connection with someone new. Report back on what happened and what you learned. We're also beginning a conversation on finding meaning. Think about what you did in your life that has made a difference. Be prepared to share what it was like to reflect on your past in this way. What did you learn? What did you realize about the process of seeking meaning? Join us in person in the Ladies Parlor or on zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85086700243?pwd=kseCP6Mmbmnnitw0JbaQwiUxhTGyuyw.1>

## Annual Meeting Recap – March 9, 2025

A new Mission Statement was adopted:

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

The new Diversity Statement was also adopted:

*As followers of Jesus Christ, we believe in celebrating the rich diversity of human experiences and creating a place where everyone feels valued, respected, and fully included. Accordingly, our community of faith wholeheartedly welcomes all people regardless of their race, gender, age, nationality, economic circumstances, physical or mental ability, or sexual orientation. The welcome and affirmation we extend reflects God's grace and love made known in Jesus Christ.*

Alice Muh, moderator, introduced a new task group that has formed to look at a new structure and updating the By-laws. The current structure is not working well now because it is such a different culture, time and smaller membership since 1934 when the By-laws were written. Alice, Mary Menzies, Dan Kiefer, Tina Peabody, and Amy Greene will work together and hope to have done by June for congregational input. They realize some things may be lost, and some members may grieve changes, but please let any of them know what you like and what is important to you. There will be more information coming in future issues of *Steeple Minute*.

Dan Kiefer reported that the trust did well last year and kept to the goal of 6% withdrawal in 2024. Phil Krill reported that the Finance committee took on stewardship duties this year and pledged money is higher in 2025 than 2024. The 2025 proposed budget was presented: \$188,504 in income and \$219,900 in expenses for a deficit of \$31,396. Phil concluded that the majority of the expenses are building and staff related and it is important to maintain the quality of what we have. All were in favor of passing the 2025 budget as presented.

### The slate of officers:

Moderator: Alice Muh (2nd term, 1st year)

Vice Moderator: Dan Kiefer (2nd term, 1st year)

Treasurer: Joyce Krill (3rd term, 1st year)

Assistant Treasurer: Rachel Clark (3rd term, 1st year)

Alice thanked everyone working on committees, task forces, hospitality and to Peter for his hard work. Phil thanked long time finance committee member and trust fund trustee, Dudley Bailey, for all of his years of service. Dudley retired from the committee and Phil announced Dick Searles and Vic Carbonneau will be joining the committee in 2025.



Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz offered prayers to all of the church leaders and thanked them for how they say yes to this community to give such hope and encouragement and how they value all opinions. He thanked each staff member, Pam Nute, Dottie Morton and Reg LaFlam with individual examples of how they say yes and show up for the work of the church. Peter offered a prayer of thanks to how the membership says yes to the work of the church and the acts of care and participation they give all year long.

Tina made a motion to approve the 2024 Annual Report as written. Su Schott seconded, there was no discussion and all were in favor to approve the 2024 Annual Report as written.

Other business included Pam Nute committing to organizing a fundraising dinner on May 18th since there will already be a houseful of people in the building. It will be a buffet dinner immediately after the White Mountain Voices concert on Sunday afternoon.



Curran, JoBeth and Kim at the Community Band Concert



## Thank you for Recycling your Plastic!

I wanted to send you a picture of the bench that was installed at All Saints Church this month. We have put it near the Food Pantry so that clients will have a place to sit while waiting to fill their orders.

I want to thank you all for your hard work in collecting the plastic. We met our challenge goal off 1,000 lbs. on January 28th and I was able to sign us up for a new challenge on March 19th. We have a year to collect another 1,000 lbs. which we will be able to do very easily.

The students at the Bethlehem Elementary Recycling Club will make the decision of where the next bench goes. The students have been very active collecting plastic and as they are the future of this planet and I would like to encourage them in their care and concern for the environment.

I have already made the first delivery of this new challenge! Please keep collecting plastic. **Remember it needs to stretch and be clean.** The collection bin is outside of the office door.

Thank you also to **Reg and Pam** who coordinate and make deliveries of the plastic too!

With many thanks,  
Hilary Veilleaux



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

# ***STEEPLE MINUTE***

## ***APRIL 2025***



### **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

