

Steeple Minute

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

April 1, 2026

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Pastor Peter's Corner

I have never picked such an unpopular book for a Lenten study than Knowing Jesus by James Alison! However I am still a huge fan of what he says about the significance of Jesus and the Resurrection - even if he could have said it in a clearer way! For those of you who don't get my weekly email, I'll take one more try at lifting up what I find so provocative:

Jesus appears to his disciples in the resurrection appearances bearing the wounds inflicted on him by his friends who hurt, wounded, denied, betrayed and deserted him. Jesus appears to them not as one to whom nothing had happened but as one who bore all the horror that happened to him.

His resurrection is a complete surprise to all to whom he appears and completely transforms their lives. Peter's last words about Jesus were denying that he was one of his disciples. In John, chapter 21, the scripture text we'll share on Easter Sunday, Jesus appears on the shore and calls out to the disciples who have gone fishing. *Cast your nets on the other side*, he calls. They do and their nets are filled with an abundance of fish. That is what leads the disciples to know who he is - the experience of abundance, of gift where they thought nothing was possible, of what we call grace - an unmerited, unexpected free gift of love, forgiveness, mercy.

The disciples come ashore and a charcoal fire is burning. The last time we have heard of a charcoal fire was when Peter denied being a disciple of Jesus three times. Did he remember that terrible experience and the fear, confusion, shame he felt then when he came ashore and smelled the charcoal fire?

But instead of being met with our familiar human ways of meeting someone who we have hurt - *I wish you'd have done better, You are no longer my friend, You hurt me so I'll hurt you*, Jesus responds in a way that breaks open their imaginations, their hearts, their lives. He offers them breakfast of fish and bread and invites Peter and the other disciples to live into their call to love. As they have received love, grace, forgiveness, a new life - so they are called out to living lives of grace with others who are excluded, don't belong, don't fit in.

To know Jesus according to Alison is to live and act in abundant grace with all who are excluded - welcoming the stranger, feeding the hungry.

Can we imagine being met ourselves with unmerited, free, abundant gracious love not because of who we are or what we have done? A grace that is freely given to us in our imperfections, failures, and inability to be the people Christ calls us to be? An amazing grace of love offered to all of us who fall short and don't live up to all we hope to be. Can we be a people who receive grace and so continue to become a community of grace to all those who we so easily say are "other", enemy, stranger, those who we say don't belong?


When we reach out to those we exclude and to the parts of ourselves we hide away in shame, we know Jesus according to Alison. Knowing Jesus is not about something we think, it is made known in how we act and live.

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First Congregational Church

April 2026



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
KEY: FH - Fellowship Hall LP - Ladies Parlor CR - Classroom			1 8:30 AM – Bible Study & Prayer - Zoom 6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- LP 7:00 PM-AA-FH	2 Maundy Thursday 6:00 PM – Maundy Service – Lisbon Shared Ministry 6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP 7 :00 PM-AA-FH	3 GOOD FRIDAY Noon – Good Friday Service - Sanctuary SLLC Closed	4 10:00 AM – Lenten Retreat – Ladies Parlor 7:00 PM – Easter Vigil Service – All Saints Church 7:00 PM-AA-FH
5 EASTER 6:15 AM – Sunrise Service Sunset Hill House 9:00 AM – Adult Bible Class 10:00 AM-Worship Service <i>Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz</i>	6 Office Closed 7:00 PM – AA - FH	7 8:30 AM – Personnel- Peter's Office/Zoom	8 8:30 AM – Bible Study & Prayer - Zoom 6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- LP 7:00 PM-AA-FH	9 Happy Birthday! Bob Oleary 6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP 7 :00 PM-AA-FH	10 Pastor's Sabbath	11 9:00 AM – SLLC Finance meeting – CR 10:00 AM – SLLC Anniversary planning meeting - CR 7:00 PM-AA-FH
12 SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER 9:00 AM – Adult Bible Class 10:00 AM-Worship Service <i>Brian Muh</i>	13 Happy Birthday! Curran Smith David Boyle 11:00 AM – Aging discussion grp. - LP 7:00 PM – AA - FH	14 6:00 PM – SLLC BOD - Zoom 6:00PM – Eastern Star – FH	15 8:30 AM – Bible Study & Prayer - Zoom 6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- LP 7:00 PM – AA – FH	16 9:30 AM – Council – CR/ Zoom 6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP 7 :00 PM-AA-FH	17 Happy Birthday! Su Schott	18 7:00 PM-AA-FH
19 THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER 9:00 AM – Adult Bible Class 10:00 AM-Worship Service 11:15 AM - Coffee Hour Conversation on Half-Time Pastor position <i>Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz</i>	20 Pastor Away 7:00 PM – AA - FH	21 Pastor Away	22 8:30 AM – Bible Study & Prayer - Zoom 6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- LP 7:00 PM – AA – FH	23 6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP Pastor Away 7 :00 PM-AA-FH	24 Pastor Away	25 Pastor Away 7:00 PM-AA-FH
26 FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER FOOD COLLECTION SUNDAY 9:00 AM – Adult Bible Class 10:00 AM-Worship Service , 11:15 AM - Coffee Hour Conversation on Half-Time Pastor position <i>Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz</i> 6:00PM – Marching Band Practice – FH	27 11:00 AM – Aging discussion grp. - LP 7:00 PM – AA - FH	28	29 8:30 AM – Bible Study & Prayer - Zoom 6:00 PM – Choir rehearsal- LP 7:00 PM – AA – FH	30 Happy Birthday! Chris Sundman 6:00 PM-AIAnon-LP 7 :00 PM-AA-FH	 Please be sure to let Pam know if you would like your birthday and/or anniversary included!	

Financial Report		Financial Report		Good Friday Ecumenical Choir
January 31, 2026	YTD	February 28, 2026	YTD	
Member support:	\$11,215	Member support:	\$26,817	Choir rehearsals – Wednesday, April 1 at 6pm at First Congregational, Friday, April 3 at 11am before the noon worship service. Questions – contact Dottie Morton
Scheduled w/d from trust funds	\$ 0	Scheduled w/d from trust funds	\$ 0	
Other Income:	\$ 855	Other Income:	\$ 1,563	
Total Income:	\$12,070	Total Income:	\$28,380	
Total Expenses:	\$18,844	Total Expenses:	\$32,489	
Net:	\$ -6,774	Net:	\$ -4,109	

Were you Aware?

Beginning January 1, 2026, even if you don't itemize deductions on your federal tax return, you can now claim a charitable deduction of up to \$1,000 (single filers) or \$2,000 (married couples). This means every gift – large or small – can count toward these amounts. When you place any cash in the Sunday offering you should **put the cash in an envelope with your name** or pledge number on it. The church can then record the amount you gave and issue you a quarterly statement reflecting it.

Sundays, April 19 and 26 – Coffee Hour Conversation on Half-Time Pastor position

The personnel board will be sharing a plan for what Peter's transition to a half-time pastor position in September will look like. Come and bring your questions!

[Thank you to the Caring Tree!](#)

As always, let Elaine Pollak from the Caring Tree (802-633-3669) and Peter know of pastoral and prayer concerns, if you would like to have a visit or conversation, and other ways we can support you as your community of faith!

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Our nation and world are experiencing a breakdown in community. We are quick to draw lines and take sides. Quick to turn to violence and hate against those who are different from us, who don't agree with us. Knowing Jesus means living in a different way than we see reflected all around us. It is hard and perhaps impossible not to be caught up in all the divisions and "othering" in our nation today. And yet, our forebears in faith call us to step into a different way and show the Jesus we know in a different way of living with each other. In church we come together each time we gather to practice this way of being. We do not and will not do it perfectly. But again it's not about being perfect or getting it right. It is about opening up to grace and forgiveness with and for each other and offering the surprise of grace and love to all who are excluded in our community, nation and world.

Join us this Easter and Eastertide Season to celebrate this call and Good News!

Peter

Peter will be away Sunday, April 12 and April 20-25

Sunday, April 12 - Welcome Brian Muh! "Growing Together", Ephesians 4

Rev. Brian Muh, son of Bob and Alice Muh, grew up at First Congregational Church. His faith came alive at campus ministry at UNH and he went on to become a church planter with the Assembly of God in Pennsylvania. He had an opportunity to return to campus ministry at UNH and he currently serves as the team leader for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship campus ministries.

We'll have a coffee hour conversation with Brian to learn more about his work in campus ministry.

An Eastertide Worship Series: You Have Something Holy to Offer

Peter is grateful to his friend and colleague, Rev. Philomena Hare, Pastor of First Congregational Church of Wareham, Massachusetts for the gift of sharing her Eastertide Worship Series with us.

Philomena writes, Over these seven weeks, this series invites us to reflect on the spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit gives for strengthening of the church and the blessing of the world. Together, we will consider what it means to name, claim, and share those gifts with humility, courage, and love. At a time when many quietly wonder whether they still matter and have something to offer, we will remember this good news: the Spirit still gives gifts, the church still needs every member, and the world is still waiting to be blessed.

April 19 – The Spirit Gives (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)

April 26 – Every Part Matters (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)

May 3 – The Church Discerns (Romans 12:3-8)

May 10 – Stir Up the Gift (2 Timothy 1:3-7)

May 17 – For the Common Good (1 Peter 4:10-11)

May 24 – Pentecost Sunday: The World is Blessed (Acts 2:1-4; Ephesians 4:1-16)

May 31 – The More Excellent Way (1 Corinthians 12:31b-13:13)

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.

Let Peter know if you would like him to pick you up and give you a ride to any of these services.

Good Friday Ecumenical Choir - Choir rehearsals - Wednesday April 1 at 6pm at First Congregational, and Friday, April 3 at 11am before the noon worship service. Questions - contact Dottie Morton.

Maundy Thursday, April 2, 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!

Good Friday, April 3, 12:00pm - We'll gather this year here in the sanctuary for an ecumenical service of readings and reflections to mark this day of Jesus' crucifixion. Contact Peter Ilgenfritz if you would like to take part as a worship leader.

Holy Saturday Retreat, Saturday April 4, 10am-noon - Rev. Veronika Travis is offering a retreat from 10-12 on Saturday morning, April 4 to reflect on the scripture texts on this in-between day when "nothing happens."

Participants may bring:

A journal and writing or drawing implements.

Knitting, crocheting or other "fidget items" they may want during the talks.

Comfy shoes and jackets for walking.

Any other Spirit led activity they enjoy (coloring books, drawing paper, prayer beads, a favorite Bible for lection divina, etc.)

Thank you for helping us spread the word about our worship schedule and this special retreat! Sign-up for the retreat is not required but would be helpful with planning - folks can RSVP to peter@1stconglittleton.org or call or text me at 206-484-9814.

Nature's Calling community, Saturday, April 4th 2026 for an Easter Eve gathering - 3 p.m. at Ski Hearth Farm in Sugar Hill, NH.

We'll meet for roughly an hour and 15 minutes. It's always good to leave room for an hour and a half just to be prepared. We'll open up our senses and place our bodies back onto the land. We'll slow down, simply to notice what is happening within and around us. We may have a few extra surprises being Easter and all which may include an Easter egg hunt in nature! For adults, bringing your inner child is highly encouraged!

These gatherings are free and a way to explore what it means to humans in a community interconnected within a more than human world. We look forward to meeting you on the beautiful land.

Easter Vigil Service, Saturday, April 4, 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 5, 6:15am - an outdoor worship service to celebrate Easter Sunday. Debbie Alberini will be giving the sermon.

Easter Sunday, 10am - Invite your family and friends to join us to celebrate a special Easter Sunday with us! The sanctuary will be abloom with beautiful Lilies to celebrate and remember our loved ones.

Easter Egg Hunt on the grounds of Franconia Community Church 12 noon.

The office will be closed on Easter Monday, the 6th.



Pastor Peter leading Lenten Book Study on "*Knowing Jesus*"

Conversations on Aging – Monday Mornings at 11am April 13 and 27: Come join us every other week for what's been a lively and fun conversation on the joys and challenges of aging!

If you are interested in joining the Council Meetings via Zoom, please contact Pam in the office for the link.

MISSIONS SPOTLIGHT

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.

Thank you! \$1,737 was Raised!



Wednesday Morning 8:30-9:15 Zoom Bible Study: Join us each week for a chance to learn and talk together about the upcoming scripture in our Sunday morning worship service.

Here's a new Zoom Meeting link to join the Bible Study on Wednesday mornings:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85167459117?pwd=On3atUkvaEb8iaizLkIYYyOa3bsjbi.1>

Plans are currently underway to celebrate the 20th year anniversary of Shining Lights Learning Center!

The second meeting was held on March 24th as another brainstorming/conceptual session and the next meeting will take place on April 11th at 10am in the classroom. If you would like to join in on the planning, please join us!

The tentative plans to celebrate on September 26th changed. After more thought, it was decided it would take place, **Sunday, September 13th**. There will be a special worship service and following that will be a brunch and activities for the children in the Fellowship Hall. Please put a place marker in your calendar – we want you to celebrate this achievement with us!

Last month a little history of how it all started was provided and as promised, here is another installment. We left off how the opening of Shining Lights preschool in the fall of 2006 provided enormous new energy to the entire congregation in addition to providing a wonderful new resource for the community.

Growth and transition followed in 2007 to 2009. In 2007, after the resignation of the second director, the Deacons and Church Council decided that Pastor Ed Lopeman would serve as “interim director” for SLLC. As part of the process, it was necessary to decide whether to continue to support the school’s mission as a Christian daycare/preschool or change into a secular school. A motion to reaffirm the mission statement passed unanimously. All were reminded that the church would not run SLLC.

After a rocky start (28 staff hired and gone; 28 children enrolled, and then 28 children left), by the end of 2007, SLLC had 8 stable staff members and 30 full and part-time children as reported in the SLLC Annual Report. A committee was formed and worked closely with the SLLC Board to help them turn the program around. The congregation had fully supported the struggling mission through the first half of the year. “With current enrollment figures, SLLC should be able to break even by the spring of 2008” (Stewardship and Finance report, 2007). Window sashes were replaced; flooring repaired; entryway tiling replaced; removed asbestos and old boiler from the cellar beneath SLLC (PC report, 2007).

Another bumpy transition occurred in 2008 with yet another directorial change. The SLLC report in 2008 stated, “The number of children dwindled but rebounded by the end of the year. The Center has been operating in the black since July thanks in part to generous donors. Tuition is at the highest level in this area, but does not yet cover expenses. The Center is undergoing a by-laws change to open the Board to more parents.”

Stayed tuned next month for the final year of transition in 2009 and to its stabilization in 2010!

Shining Lights Learning Center



More outdoor time with the weather warming up!
We're going for lots of walks, and loving the swings. AND improving our puzzle skills!



Palm Sunday CAKE WALK

This fundraiser benefits the children of Shining Lights Learning Center!

\$595 raised!



ALL ARE WELCOME!

SOUPER SATURDAY



April 11th, 12-3pm

TAD'S PLACE
149 EAST SIDE DR CONCORD, NH

**Nothing warms the body and soul like some good soup
with some great company!**

On Saturday, April 11th Horton Center friends, families, campers, alumni, volunteers, and more are welcome to join us for a soup luncheon at Havenwood Heritage Height's Tad's Place. Together we will share in a bit of the camp spirit as we enjoy delicious homemade soups, breads, and desserts provided by NH UCC churches. This event is FREE for everyone!

RSVP at the link below to receive your tickets which you'll turn in upon arrival to be entered into our raffle!

Questions? Email Tivvi: TPare@nhcucc.org

RSVP:

tinyurl.com/soupersaturday26



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APRIL 2026



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A brief newsletter of the
First Congregational Church
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Church Staff

Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz, Pastor
Office Manager: Pam Nute
Organist & Choir Director: Dottie Morton
Sexton: Reg LaFlam

Officers

Moderator: Alice Muh
Secretary: Jo Beth Dudley
Treasurer: Joyce Krill
Council: Tim Gould, Elaine Pollak, Kim Smith
Mary Menzies

Team Leads

Administration: Laurie Boswell/TimGould
Caring: Elaine Pollak
Christian Formation: Kim Smith
Worship: Mary Menzies

Shining Lights Learning Center

Board Chair: Suzanne Schott
Director: Vanessa Neuroth

