THE FIRST CHURCH

NASHUA, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Congregational – United Church Of Christ

†

Gathered December 16, 1685

"No matter who you are, whom you love, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here."

Morning Worship

Fifth Sunday in Lent

March 29, 2020

APPROACH TO GOD

Let us keep silence as we prepare for worship.

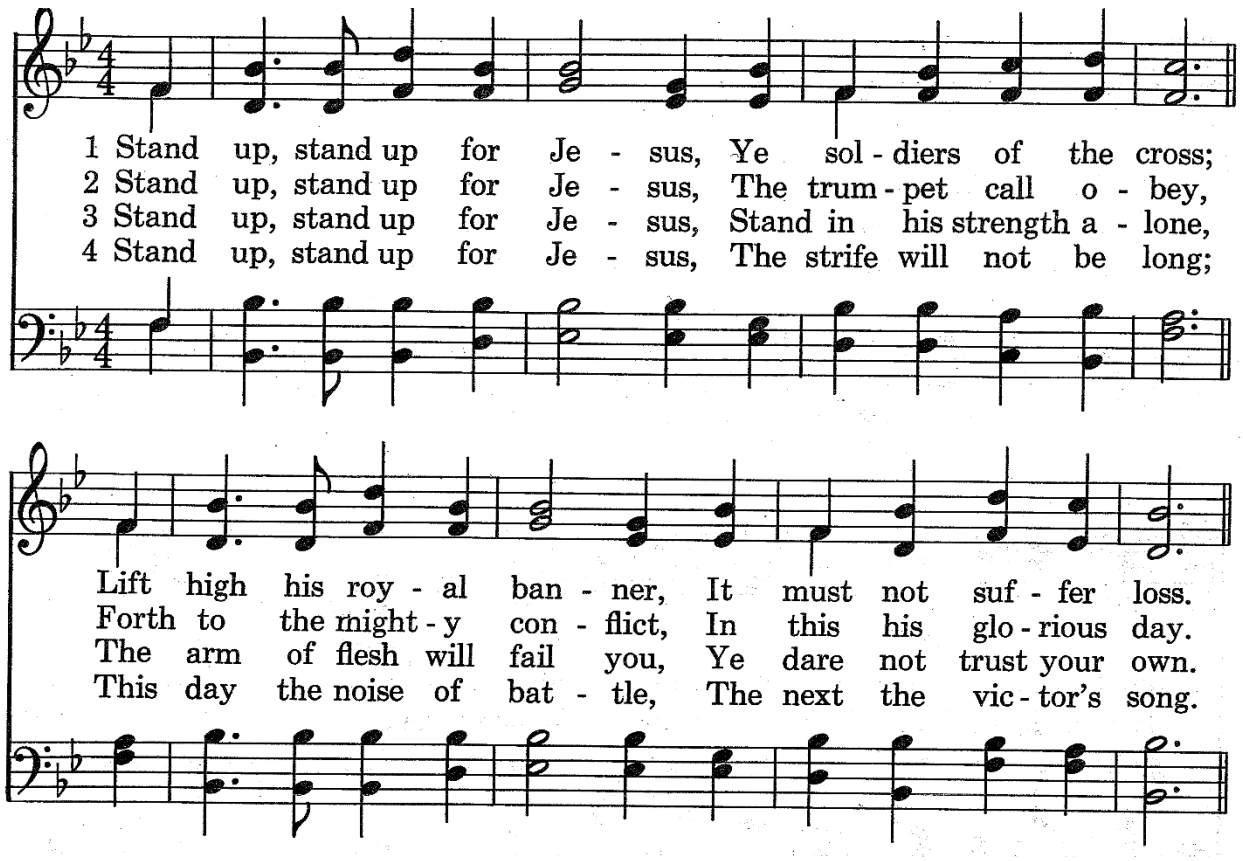
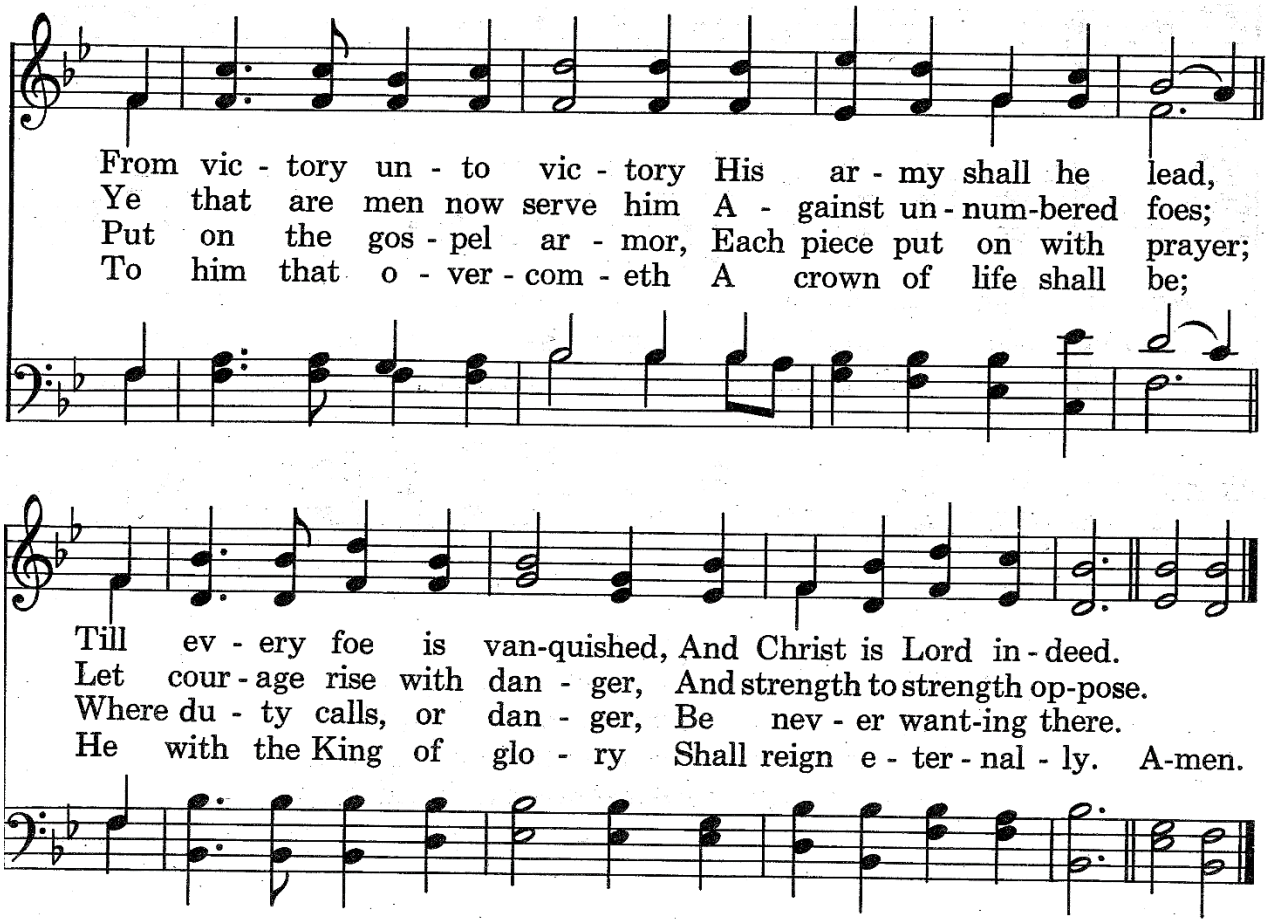
MEDITATION "Grief is itself a medicine." William Cowper

PRELUDE *Sérénade* C.-M. Widor
(1844 – 1937)

CALL TO WORSHIP (Based on Psalm 130)

Minister: The Lord be with you.
People: And also with you.
Minister: Lift up your voice and call out to God.
People: We cry out, believing that God hears us.
Minister: Come together and wait for God.
People: We come together, trusting that God is still speaking.
Minister: Surely God's presence is here with us now.
People: We wait in hope, for God's steadfast love lifts our hearts.
Minister: Come, worship the Lord.
Together: We celebrate the power of God that restores us.

***HYMN #385** *Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus* WEBB



CCLI#3034682 Source: Pilgrim Hymnal

***OPENING PRAYER**

Holy God, Creator of Life, you call us out of our dark places, offering us the grace of new life. When we see nothing but hopelessness, you surprise us with the breath of your Holy Spirit. When we are panicked by storms around us and silence with us, set us free from our self-imposed bonds, and fill us with your spirit of life, compassion, and peace, In the name of Jesus, your anointed one, we pray. Amen.

GREETINGS

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S WORD

SCRIPTURE READINGS **Psalm 130**

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.

Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?

But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;

my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.
O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem.
It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

John 11:17-27,32-43

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.” When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?” Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!”

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.
People: Thanks be to God.

SERMON “Out of the Depths” Rev. Dr. Andrew Armstrong

RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD

***CENTERING PRAYER (Unison)**

God of all consolation and compassion, your Son comforted the grieving sisters, Martha and Mary; your breath alone brings life to dry bones and weary souls. Pour out your Spirit upon us, that we may face loss and grief with the hope of resurrection and faith in the One who called Lazarus forth from the grave. Amen.

PRAYER CONCERNS

SILENT PRAYERS and PASTORAL PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done,
On earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day, our daily bread
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

OFFERTORY *Jesus Walks This Lonesome Valley* Spiritual
JOSEPH R. OLEFIROWICZ, baritone *arr. Shackley*

***DOXOLOGY #515** OLD HUNDRETH

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise him all creatures here below;
Praise him above, ye heavenly host:
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen

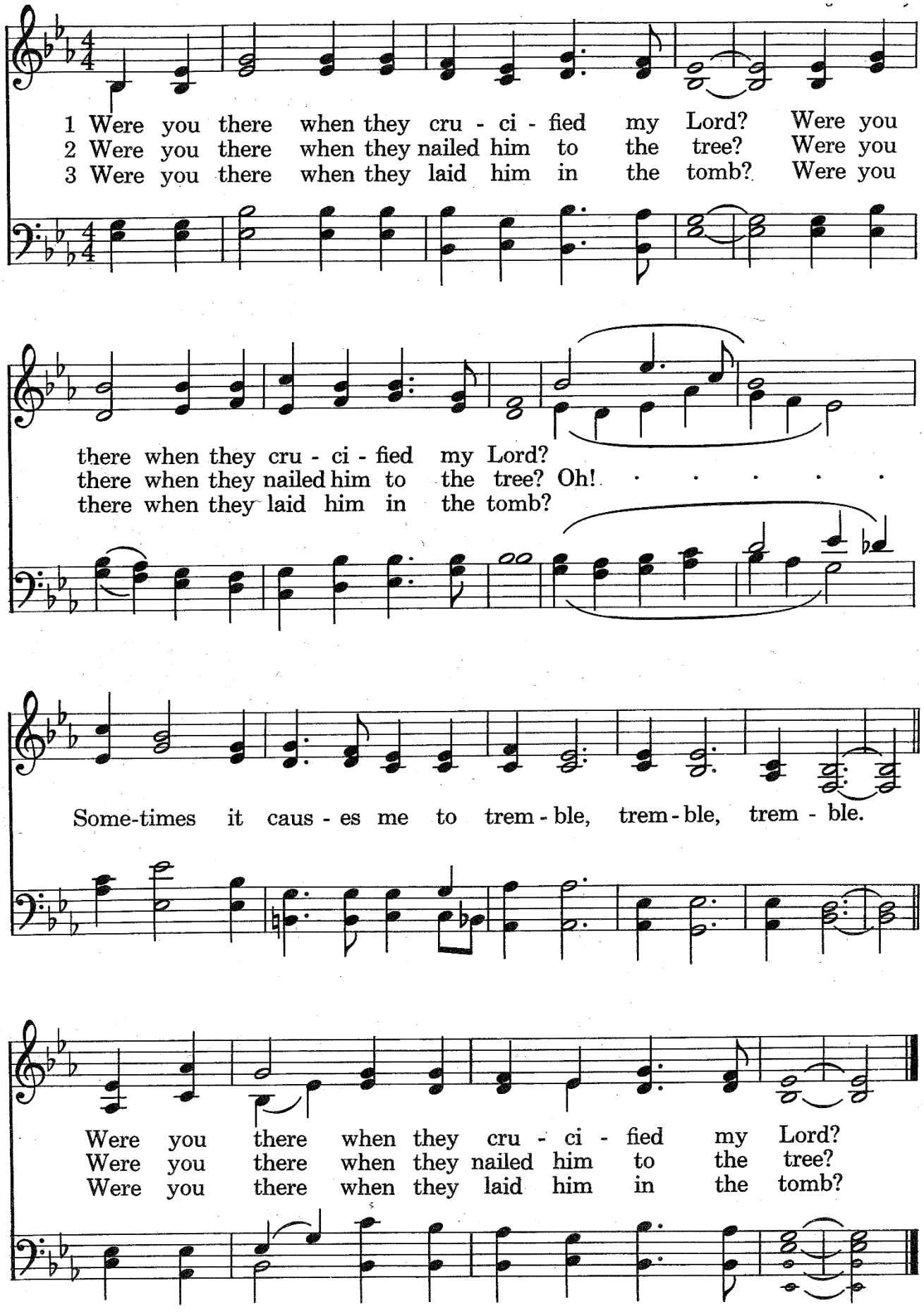
***PRAYER OF DEDICATION** (Unison)

We have the means to give, we have the reason to give, and there are many waiting for us to give. Yet often, our hands hold back. God of grace, help us live and give in your kingdom of love, where there are no enemies, only brothers and sisters, and kindness is the air we breathe. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

***HYMN #179** *Were You There?* WERE YOU THERE

***BENEDICTION**

Cover Art:
The Raising of Lazarus (after Rembrandt)
Vincent van Gogh, May 1890
https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/collection/s0169V1962

Were You There?

CCLI#3034682 Source: Pilgrim Hymnal

“In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.”
Proverbs 16:9

Friends,
By now you have heard the COVID-19 Pandemic compared to the Spanish Influenza of 1918. Epidemiologists believe that the Spanish Influenza came to the United States in the summer of 1918 when two Sailors retuned to Boston on leave from their duties in WWI. Weeks later this headline appeared in the Nashua Telegraph on September 17th, 1918: “Influenza is Epidemic in Nashua.”

Out of curiosity, I went to into the First Church archives and pulled down the service records for 1918. Yes, we have worship bulletins that are easily accessible dating back to 1898! Bulletins are missing for the months of September and October. Then on November 3rd, the bulletins resume when it is announced that November 10th will be named “Rally Sunday.” That’s odd given that most churches, ours included, are accustomed to “Rally Sunday” as a return to Fall programming.

I’ve yet to find an annual report that provides all the details. When I do I’m certain that Rev. Dr. Cyrus Richardson will have provided a meticulous accounting! However, I did some research and came across this headline in the October 29, 1918 addition of The Evening Star (Washington, D. C.): “The Church Ban Lifted.” I think it’s safe to assume that in 1918 First Church worship services were suspended for September and October; resumed when the nationwide ban was lifted on October 29th; reassembled on November 3rd and Rallied in celebration on November 10th, 1918.

I feel great comfort knowing that our spiritual ancestors faced a monumental challenge to their lives and faith and somehow managed to continue a ministry which is our heritage today. By God’s grace and our courage, I trust that we will add our own stories to it and leave a legacy for those who will come after us.

I’m unsure when exactly we’ll resume public worship. I do think that is will have a special magnificence….and even a cake!

With you in prayer and perseverance,
Rev. Andy

Mobile Ministry
We have members and friends who must remain isolated because of underlying vulnerabilities to COVID-19 or are in quarantine. They have a need for groceries, medications, and connection. We have formed a network of persons who are willing to shop and deliver necessary food, supplies, and medications. Rev. Ken is coordinating this ministry. If you would like to be part of that team, please inform Rev. Ken at kmcgarry@tfcucc.org. Also, if you have need, or know someone in need, then inform Rev. Ken.

Caring Connections
The Digital Devotion (Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday)

Social isolation will curb the spread of COVID-19, but it can be emotionally and spiritually painful. Each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 12:30, your ministry team will post an encouraging message and prayer on our website and Facebook.

Prayer Chain

The prayer chain remains up and running. Rev. Jami will provide updates on a regular basis so we can be holding up one another and our community before the Lord in prayer. Please direct your prayer concerns to jboyle@tfcucc.org.

Prayer in Shaw Chapel has been discontinued due to Governor Sununu's stay-at-home order.

Music Ministry and First Music Concert Series

Music Ministry members have received separate correspondence suspending all choir activity through April 12. First Music Concert Series is postponing all programs scheduled for 3/20, 3/27, and 4/5.

Study Groups online

Rev. Andy's Wednesday Morning Men's Group continues online.

Christian Education

Rev. Ken is leading confirmation classes online. Also, he and Diane Matthes are establishing an online community for parents of youth and children to offer support, ideas, and encouragement for the challenges caused by disruptions of all our routines.

Pastoral Care

Your ministers are available 24/7 to talk and pray with you as need arises. Our contact information is as follows:

- Rev. Andy---978-844-2617 (mobile)
- Rev. Ken---203-722-4901 (mobile)
- Rev. Jami---603-325-0772 (mobile)

Worship

Worship services will be posted on our website each Sunday up to and through May 4.

Giving

Our financial giving remains crucial to maintain our ministry, to support the spiritual health of the church family, and continue our Outreach to mission partners in and around Nashua. Please mail in your offering or consider e-giving though our website at https://tfcucc.org/give/.

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." --Philippians 4:4-6

Christian Education Corner

Rev. Ken will continue to provide a Children's Message in the taped worship service. Parents and children are encouraged to view it online at tfcucc.org.

Heifer Collection – Please continue to make your donations to the Heifer project. Collection of the cans and presentation of the gifts will be made at later date, TBD.

Scholarships and Grants - The First Church Scholarships and Grants are awarded each year to deserving members who intend to further their education beyond high school. Criteria include:

Scholarships:

Student members graduating from high school who:

- Intend to further their education beyond high school
- Serve and participate in the church

Grants:

Adult members who:

- Intend to further their education in any way (additional certification, a single course for a specific purpose, an additional degree, etc.)
- Serve and participate in the church

Applications are available at: www.tfcucc.org Click on EDUCATE and scroll down to Scholarships.

Direct All Questions To: scholarships@tfcucc.org

Deadline for Applications is April 15, 2020
Scholarships and grants will be awarded on Children's Day, June 14.

Church Happenings and Outreach - New/Current

All church events are on hiatus at least through May 4. We will update you as more information becomes available to us.

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Easter Flowers - Thank you to all who ordered Easter flowers so far. We will place them in the sanctuary to beautify the service whether we are gathered together in person or online. We will continue to receive additional flowers orders until March 30. Call the church office or email Sue Englander with your request. We will arrange for delivery of your flowers to you or to a shut-in after Easter.

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Emergency Relief Fund - The First Church Family is establishing an Emergency Relief Fund for our members, our mission partners and our ministries. Given the needs that we see now and anticipate in the days and weeks to come due to sickness and economic strain, we want to do our utmost to provide for the welfare and wellbeing of the congregation and community. To this end, the monies will be placed in an account to be distributed by our ministers with Prudential oversight. These funds are in addition to the ready cash in The Ministers Discretionary Fund.

We are grateful that this fund begins with $50,000 based on contributions from leads gifts. If you would like to donate, please make a check payable to First Church Nashua, Memo: "Emergency Relief Fund." Also, you may go online to tfcucc.org/give. If you have a need, please reach out to Revs. Andy or Ken who will handle all requests confidentially. In the meantime, should you have any questions, please contact Rev. Andy, Joe Glajch, Erin Almeda, Peter Chaloner or Lori Lambert.

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If you wish to receive Rev. Andy's letters via email, please contact Dianne Smigliani and she will add you to the e-News distribution. His updates are also posted on our website under "COVID-19 Updates".

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Kitchen Training Postponed - The kitchen training session scheduled for April 13 is postponed until a later date, TBD. Stay tuned for further information.

The online kitchen-training refresher course is extended to April 30. This is for everyone who was previously trained to view a refresher and complete a short quiz to document continued competency in kitchen protocols.

Have time on your hands right now? This is the perfect opportunity to refresh yourselves with kitchen procedures and take the quiz.

Contact Erin Almeda or Don Dillaby with any questions.

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Mission Trip to North Carolina: June 27 - July 5, 2020 - Adults and youth 14 years of age and older are invited to participate in a project to repair and rebuild homes in eastern NC severely damaged by high winds and flood waters by Hurricanes Dorian (2019), Florence (2018), and Matthew (2016).
Our group will be working with the Disaster Ministries of the United Church of Christ and our mission partner in North Carolina, the United Methodist Church.
Contact Rev. Ken if you would like to know more about this trip.

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Let us Prepare for Easter…watch *Jesus of Nazareth* "together"! Rev. Jami invites you and your family to watch this 1977 Franco Zefferelli, all-star film, as a way to prepare for Easter. We will watch the film and Rev. Jami will host a Zoom call on April 8th to discuss the film.

Now that we are staying home, and getting more accustomed to virtual encounters, let's do something as a church community that is easy for most of us to do and something that will pay spiritual dividends.
Let's watch Jesus of Nazareth "together!"

Rev Jami has watched this six-hour film every Lent for the past thirty years as a way to prepare for the season of Christ's death and resurrection. You can binge watch it or, like her, divide your viewing into three two-hours sessions.

The first two hours include the annunciation, birth and circumcision of John the Baptist, Joseph's visitation, the Nativity of Jesus, the visit of the Magi, the Massacre of the Innocents, and the baptism of Jesus. **The next two hours** begin with Jesus calling his disciples, Jesus' ministry of healing and preaching, the killing of John the Baptist, introduction of Mary Magdalene, and Jesus' journey into Jerusalem for Passover. **The final two hours** include the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, the Sanhedrin trial of Jesus,

Peter's denying Christ, Pilate's judgment, the Passion narrative, crucifixion, the empty tomb, and the appearance of the risen Christ to his Disciples.
The film may be viewed in the following locations online.

View Jesus of Nazareth on YouTube.
View Jesus of Nazareth on your Amazon Prime account.
This film is not available on Netflix

There are two and a-half weeks before Easter to "watch together." On W**ednesday, April 8 from 3:30-4:30 PM,** Rev. Jami will host a Zoom Call-in so that we can discuss your experiences. She will send out another email about how to access that Zoom Call-in during Holy Week.
You may also contact Rev. Jami through email if you have any questions or insights.

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First Music Concert Series Update - At this time, the concert programs scheduled for Fridays at First (3/20, 3/27) and FIRST MUSIC Concert Series (4/5) have been indefinitely postponed.

In these times which are affecting artists worldwide fiscally through multiple engagement cancellations, FIRST MUSIC has made the commitment to honor all agreements with our Artists, and pay them in full, as they are mostly freelancers, greatly reliant on this income.

To the generous contributors of the inaugural 2019-2020 Friend of First Music campaign, please know your generosity not only helps us see the financial commitment to these artists through, but also leaves the Series in a position where there is not a significant loss to our organization as in seasons when all artist costs was offset through ticket income only.

THANK YOU!

There is little else to say except to express gratitude for your patronage, encouragement and stewardship to FIRST MUSIC. With wishes for you and your families to get through the coming time as healthy as possible. We look forward to welcoming you back, bringing music to the Gate City as soon as we can.

In gratitude,
Joseph R. Olefirowicz, CAGO
Artistic Director,
First Music Concert Series

Eric Ruthenberg,
Chair, Music Committee

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National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Educational Course Update - NAMI will hold the Family-to-Family Educational Course beginning April 6th. The class will be held "live online" on Monday nights from 6:00-8:30 PM. This FREE 8-week course is for family and friends of individuals with serious mental illness. Space is limited; enrollment is required. For more information, or to enroll, contact Pam Burns at 603-345-5304 or Norma MacKinley-Smith at 603-882-6771.

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Music in Worship Next Sunday
April 5, 2020
Palm Sunday
Staff Singer Quartet

THE FIRST CHURCH

STAFF

Senior Minister, *Rev. Dr. Andrew W. Armstrong*, aarmstrong@tfcucc.org
Associate Minister for Youth and Families, *Rev. Ken McGarry*, kmcgarry@tfcucc.org
Associate Minister for Congregational Care, *Rev. Jami D. Boyle,* jboyle@tfcucc.org
Minister of Music, *Joseph R. Olefirowicz, CAGO*, jolefirowicz@tfcucc.org
Coordinator of Christian Education, *Diane E. Matthes*, dmatthes@tfcucc.org
Church Business and Marketing Manager, *Dianne Smigliani*, dsmigliani@tfcucc.org
Secretary/Receptionist, *Susan T. Englander,* senglander@tfcucc.org
Sexton, *Bruce Lund*

Pastors Emeriti, *Rev. James S. Chaloner and Rev. Dr. Jeffrey C. Evans*

WELCOME

A warm welcome is extended to all who are attending this worship service. A special greeting to those who are visiting or worshiping for the first time. Please sign the guest book in the back of the sanctuary or fill out the **visitor card** found in the pew racks. Fill out the back of the card, and put it in the offering plate or hand it to a minister, Usher or Deacon so we may acknowledge your visit. Join in the time of fellowship, in Fellowship Hall, following worship. If you have any questions about the life and ministry of First Church please seek out the individuals wearing colored name tags; they are members of the various boards and committees.

INFORMATION

First Church was gathered on December 16, 1685 as The Church of Christ in Dunstable. On the same day Thomas Weld was ordained and settled as minister of the church. The current building, built in 1894, is the tenth building to house the First Church community. In 1961, the church entered fellowship with the United Church of Christ. We welcome into our membership any who will own the covenant of First Church and seek to continue the ministry of Jesus Christ in the community and world. Those interested in joining the church should contact the church office for information. The Sacrament of Communion is celebrated on the first Sunday of the month and the Sacrament of Baptism on the last. First Church is supported almost entirely by pledges. Every member is expected to make a financial pledge according to their ability.

PASTORAL CARE

Pastoral Care is available to all in need. Please keep the ministers informed of occasions of sickness, sorrow, and joy. Let the church office know if you or family member or friend is hospitalized.

COMMUNICATIONS

If you have a change of address, phone number, or email address, please let the church office know so that we may keep our records current.

All information for the weekly bulletin must be in the office by noon on Wednesday. All information for the monthly newsletter must be in the office by 4:30 PM on the second Monday of the month.

<u>All use of the building must be scheduled by the Secretary.</u>

THE FIRST CHURCH
NASHUA, NEW HAMPSHIRE

One Concord Street * Nashua, New Hampshire 03064 * 882-4861

Office Hours: Closed until further notice.

Visit our web site at tfcucc.org - Find us on Facebook