



THE MEETINGHOUSE

Nelson Congregational Church
830 Nelson Rd.
Nelson, NH 03457

APRIL 2023

Volume 40 Issue 3



A PROMISE

By Eliot Fay

For all of us who live north of the equator, by the time you read this article spring will have officially arrived a couple of weeks ago. However, for those of us who happen to live *very* north of the equator, we weren't holding our breath. For us, for weeks to come the ground will remain solidly frozen and snow covered, the residual water left in our watering cans will still be ice, and there will be no noticeable indication that the shrubs or trees are even thinking about producing anything green. Based on a cursory assessment, it will seem that winter has in no way relented and the promise of spring will feel like an empty one...however, a closer appraisal may result in a different perspective.

Though our temperatures will still be cold, a glance at the thermometer should indicate that our days are slowly getting warmer. The sun which seems to mostly go into hiding over the winter months will be peeking thru the clouds with increasing frequency. Our days will have grown longer due to later and later sunsets. We may even catch a glimpse of a cardinal perched outside the window come late March or early April – a sure sign that spring is near.

The beginning of April will also be marked by our celebration of Easter, the apex of the Church year. On this day we memorialize Christ's resurrection and celebrate the Divine promise that in Christ, renewal and wholeness and peace has come into our lives and to our world – a promise, as it were, of the inception of “new life”!

And yet very often it feels as though very little in our world and our lives mirrors this promise. It's easy to focus on the reality that we still find ourselves subject to much of the same brokenness and darkness that has always plagued our world. The idea of new life may feel much like the hope of spring in New England when all we see is sandy, frozen roads and leafless trees.

But I'd like to suggest that the signs of new life are not absent. As those who know God, we recognize that we have come to experience the mercy and love of God for us and the freedom that comes from knowing that God cherishes us. Though we face troubles, we receive the comfort of knowing that the Spirit of God is *always* with us. Through faith we have become part of a community in which we experience encouragement and support, however imperfectly. And though the brokenness in our world is shocking, the signs that God's Spirit is continually cultivating the virtues of love, peace, and kindness in the hearts of humankind are ever present. Yes, though we still feel the strong effects of winter, the spring that is the promise of Easter has come and is coming. May we be those who hasten its coming in and through our lives this year, for Christ has risen indeed!

COUNCIL

It's been a good month. The new furnace for the sanctuary was installed and runs quiet as a mouse. It heats up the sanctuary more quickly as well. The carbon dioxide levels in the sanctuary dropped back to acceptable levels immediately. The kitchen committee is making good progress with deep cleaning, sorting out items we no longer need, reinforcing shelving, getting castors on the mixer cart, improving storage, and figuring out whether to replace the stove/oven or not.

There are several events coming up for Holy Week and Easter. The church sanctuary will be open to all on Good Friday. There will be a family Easter egg hunt after the service on Easter Sunday.

We are starting the process to become an Open and Affirming congregation. We will be moving slowly and doing it well, being sure all voices are heard.

Moving the Food to the Library/Town Hall entryway is working well. It is actively used and in fact we need to be replenishing our stock. We have been able to fulfil five requests from the Fuel Assistance Fund and have about \$700 left. It felt good to be able to refer some people on to Southwestern Community Services (SWCS) for more help, and to at least ease the heating burden for those who would not qualify for SWCS.

Work has begun to start a fund in honor of Priscilla Walter and others, called Priscilla's Front Porch. Every year the fund will pay for a completely free community event with the intent to bring people together and build community.

We're planning to have a full church meeting in early summer to review and tweak our new governance structure.

Betsy Street
Clerk, Nelson Church

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

The committee met on March 6. Full minutes are available in the church office and on nelsonchurch.org. The most important things of general interest that we discussed were arrangements for Holy Week, and beginning the Open and Affirming process.

The schedule for Holy Week looks like this:

Palm Sunday, April 2, worship and communion at 9:30 a.m., also on Zoom.

Maundy Thursday, April 6. This evening service begins at 7 p.m. (it will not be on Zoom). We hope everyone interested can attend in person. The service will last about ½ hour and end in silence with lights dimmed.

Good Friday, April 7. The church will be open for reflection from 9 to 11 a.m., and 5 to 7 p.m.

Easter Sunday, April 9. Sunrise service is on the church lawn at 6:30 a.m., and the regular worship service is in the sanctuary at 9:30 a.m., and on Zoom, followed by coffee hour and the Easter Egg Hunt. All are welcome!

For the hardy souls who plan to attend both services, the deacons will provide coffee and a simple breakfast.

Open and Affirming (ONA): this designation by the United Church of Christ follows a process of education and a congregational commitment to openness, respect, and welcome for all persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Currently, about 65 UCC churches in New Hampshire have embraced the program and have received the designation. A small committee is being formed to spearhead ONA in Nelson.

CALENDAR

All Services are in-person and zoom. Committee Meetings other than Council are all zoom until further notice.

Congregational Life meeting Sundays at 11 in-person when able.

**APR 2 Worship 9:30
Palm Sunday**

APR 6 Maundy Thursday 7PM (no zoom)

**APR 7 Good Friday
Church Open 9am - 11am
Also 5pm—7pm**

**APR 9 Sunrise Service
6:30 Easter family service
9:30 Easter Egg Hunt following service**

**APR 13 Operations
7pm zoom**

**APR 16,23,30
Worship 9:30**

FOOD PANTRY NEEDS

We need to replenish our Food Pantry which is very well used since moving it to the entry to the Library and Town Hall

Popular items include:
Mac & cheese, lunch box size raisins, pasta, tuna, granola bars, seltzer, pasta sauce & canned soup.
Contact Martha at 603.313.3455 to make arrangements for pick-up or drop off.

OPERATIONS

Furnace update: Kelly reports that the furnace company has been paid in full for the installation for the new furnace. We are still waiting for a quote to provide heat in the elevator area. We expect the quote fairly soon. The thermostat did not reset itself with daylight savings time. Kelly reinstalled the program and was able to train Matt at the same time.

Financial report: Kate is ready to start working with Joy to learn QuickBooks; Joy and Kate are in the process of setting up a date. It's important to start working with the program during the "free trial" period; this will determine whether or not we want to continue with the software.

Kitchen cleaning: New handles have been installed on all cabinets, and cabinet doors have been cleaned. Spencer made and installed new shelves and supports on the upper cabinets. Shelf lining is being installed in all cabinets, and we're in the process of returning the kitchen items to the cupboards. Ralph supplied us with plastic storage bins to store excess kitchen items; the bins will be stored on rolling racks also provided by Ralph. Thank you to Ralph for these items.

Nelson in Common request: Eliot received a request from Nelson in Common asking to use the downstairs of the church for various events throughout the summer. The Operations Committee is in favor of this; however, we need more details on dates, frequency of use, etc. It's important that we don't overlap with existing requests from other committees or individuals.

Job descriptions and reviews: Eliot and Kate are both due for "performance reviews" and updates to their job descriptions. Eliot and Hope offered to conduct the review for Kate; the Parish/Pulpit relations Committee will conduct Eliot's review.

Next Meeting 4/13/2023: Betsy will be leading the meeting.



For Easter Sunday, the Congregational Life Committee is planning to decorate the church with lilies, tulips and other spring blooms. They will be available to take home after the service. We'll be asking for a \$10 donation. If you would like an Easter flower, please sign up on a sheet in the Narthex or tell Judy Walton, 603 -847-3228 or judywalton222@gmail.com.

KITCHEN COMMITTEE

As we continue to rejuvenate our kitchen we would like a few more volunteers to help with this effort. We want to make the kitchen easier for anyone to use. We need fresh "eyes" and ideas how best to do this. Please speak with Sue Peery or Eliot if you would like to help. A huge thanks to Brian Putnam for all his work in getting the cabinets cleaned and new hardware added and filling them back up again. There is still a table near the Pastor's office with items free to anyone for the taking. We hope to have all that cleaned out soon.

UCC CONFERENCE ITEMS OF INTEREST



New Hampshire Conference
 United Church of Christ
Earth Day Art Contest
Prizes in Four Age groups:
 3-6 Years
 7-11 Years
 12-14 Years
 15 and Older

Send entries to robert.grabill@ccdcucc.org
 Deadline April 15, 2023
 Sponsored by the
 Environmental Justice Mission Group
 NH Conference, UCC



- APR 13 Mare-Anne Jarvela
Al Stoops
- APR 14 Betsy Street
- APR 16 Eric Bower
- APR 20 Jane Beauregard
Pat Steeves
- APR 22 Alicia Zilske
- APR 26 Deb Zilske
Rick Lothrop
- APR 27 Kira Kasper
- APR 28 Peter Beauregard



Siblings in Christ,
 We are in the midst of a pivotal moment in our shared story. The well-being of transgender and non-binary youth is being debated in legislative sessions across the United States. As of March 3 there have been **385 anti-LGBTQ bills introduced**, with 108 of these bills aiming to end gender affirming healthcare for trans and non-binary youth. This places more than **54,000 trans youth actively taking life-saving gender affirming medical care at risk.**

This is the highest number of anti-LGBTQ bills ever introduced in a single legislative season.

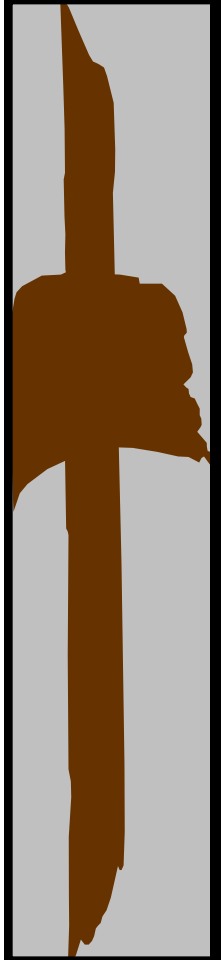
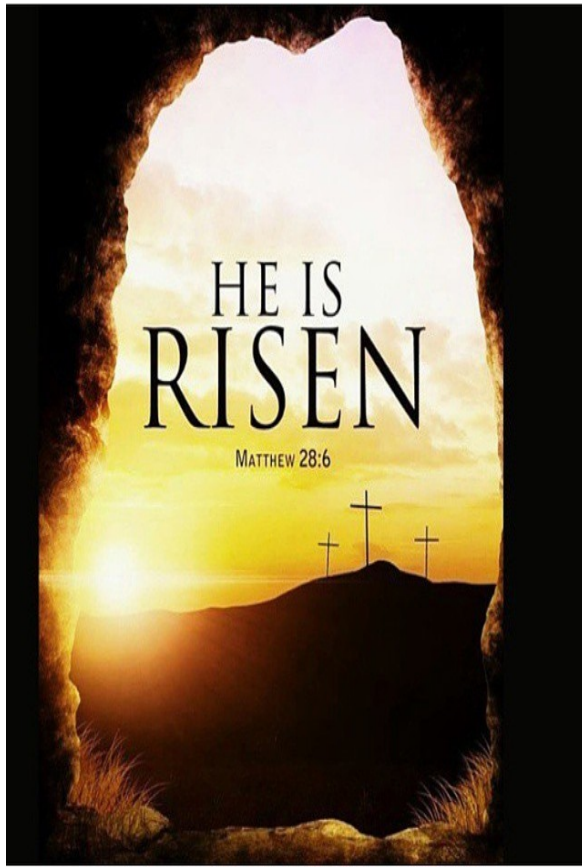
PRAYER REQUESTS

We hold in our prayers: Hope & Rick; Pat Steeves receiving treatment for cancer. We also pray for families and friends seeking to heal divisions, those in our community struggling with addiction and mental health, our service men and women, and front-line workers.

(All requests will remain on the prayer list for 2 months. Please email or call the Church Office to be added to removed from or remain on our Prayer List.)

Meetinghouse

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