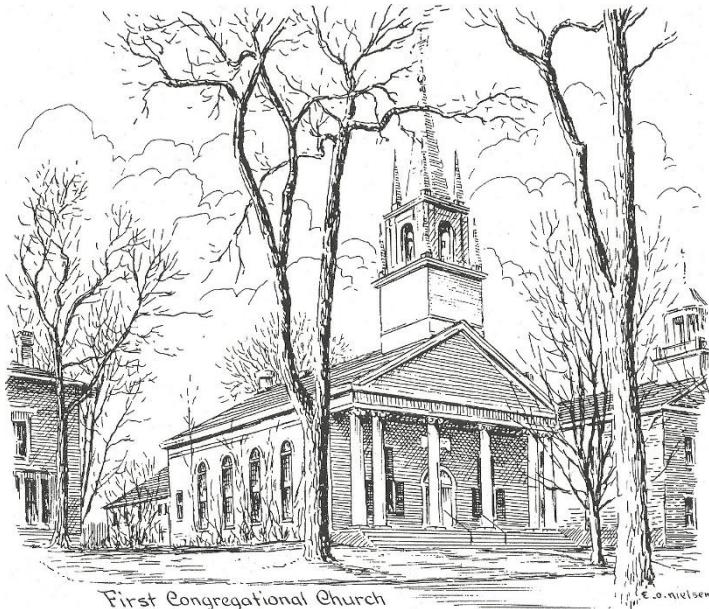


# First Congregational Church

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
*An Open and Affirming Church*



We welcome you to the First Congregational Church of Wiscasset.

*VISION: We are on a journey to reflect God's love, embracing diversity and affirming the dignity and worth of all.*

*MISSION: Together we strive to praise God, grow in faith, cultivate love, spread joy, care for all people and God's creation, promote peace, and do justice.*

**February 8, 2026**

## FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

We welcome all to our worship service, whether present in the sanctuary, joining us on streaming video, or watching our service in the future.

Spiritual Contemplation Quote for the week: “Even the sun directs our gaze away from itself and to the life illumined by it.” — **Eberhard Arnold, Salt and Light**

PRELUDE

*Offertoire*

Cesar Franck

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS

\* CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Holy God, we have left our homes and warm beds to be in your presence.

P: We gather in your name to worship and praise you.

L: May this first day of the week . . .

P: be only one of many days in which we sing your praises and worship you.

\* OPENING HYMN

*'O For A Thousand Tongues to Sing'*

No. 39

INVOCATION TO PRAYER

DAZZLING BOUQUET (refrain)

**Mine is the church where everybody's welcome.**

**I know it's true 'cause I got through the door.**

**We are a dazzling bouquet of every kind of flower.**

**Jump in the vase, 'cause we've got space for more.**

SPIRITUAL NUGGET                    'Salt of the Earth'

JOYS AND CONCERNS:                After each Joy or Concern, Please respond:

Pastor: "God," Congregation: "**Hear our prayer.**"

LIGHTING OF THE PEACE CANDLE

Global Mission Partner Prayer this week: Mozambique

MORNING PRAYER

SILENT MOMENTS FOR PERSONAL PRAYER

SCRIPTURE LESSON                    Matthew 5:13-20

Liturgist: This is the Word of God. People: **Thanks be to God.**

\* HYMN

*'This Little Light of Mine' v.1-4*

No. 364

SERMON

‘Jesus Teaches.’

OFFERTORY PRAYER

OFFERTORY

*Priere*

Cesar Franck

\* PRESENTATION WITH THE DOXOLOGY

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God for all that love has done;  
Creator, Christ, and Spirit One. Amen.**

\* DEDICATION PRAYER

\* CLOSING HYMN

*Pass it On* (UMC Hymnal)

In Bulletin

BENEDICTION

BENEDICTION RESPONSE

**Go now in peace. Never be afraid. God will go with you each hour of every day.  
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true. Know God will guide you in all you do.  
Go now in love, and show you believe. Reach out to others so all the world can see.  
God will be there watching from above. Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.**

POSTLUDE

*Sortie*

Cesar Franck

*You are invited to sit for the postlude.*

\* \* \* \* \*

**“Our worship ends, let our service begin”**

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## Pass It On

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*Unison*

1. It on - ly takes a spark to get a fire  
 2. What a won - drous time is spring, when all the trees are  
 3. I wish for you, my friend, this hap - pieness that

go - ing, and soon all those a - round can  
 bud - ding; the birds be - gin to sing, the  
 I've found; you can de - pend on him, it

warm up in its glow-ing. That's how it is with  
 flow - ers start their bloom-ing. That's how it is with  
 mat - ters not where you're bound. I'll shout it from the

God's love once you've ex - pe-rienced it; you spread his love to  
 God's love once you've ex - pe-rienced it; you want to sing, it's  
 moun-tain-top; I want my world to know; the Lord of love has

ev - ery-one; you want to pass it on.  
 fresh like spring, you want to pass it on.  
 come to me, I want to pass it on.

WORDS: Kurt Kaiser, 1969  
 MUSIC: Kurt Kaiser, 1969

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PASS IT ON  
 Irr.

**Minister and Teacher:** Rev. John Hogue

**Music Director:** Joel Pierce

**Those serving you today:**

**Ushers:** Youth Group

**Reader:** Becky Lenz

**Online Streaming:** Jen Surgeon

**Please join us** for fellowship, coffee or tea, and refreshments in Fellowship Hall following worship.

**Please take note** of the colored paper prayer slips in the pew rack. These are for you to write a word or phrase of prayer or concerns. Fold it and place it in the offering plate. It will only be shared with Rev. John.

**Happy February Birthday** to Tom Beane, Laura Downing and Sally Howe

### **Help Yourself Shelf Wish List**

\* jarred spaghetti sauce \* 1lb. white rice \* drink mixes \* canned chicken \* tuna \*  
\* cereal \* SPAM \* mayo \* baked beans \* toothpaste \* dish soap \* cat litter \*

### **Youth Group Food/Pet Food Drive**

The Youth Group is leading a food and pet food drive for the month of February. All donations will go to support our neighbors at the Help Yourself Shelf. Items can be brought in throughout the month and put in the box in Fellowship hall.

Shining the Light of Christ  
FIRST  
CONGREGATIONAL  
in the CHURCH  
Heart of Wiscasset

## **Matthew 5:13-20**

### **Salt and Light**

“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket; rather, they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

### **The Law and the Prophets**

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

This is the Word of God.

**Thanks be to God.**

New Revised Standard Version Updated Version

1. O for a thou-sand tongues to sing my great Re-deem-er's praise,  
 2. My gra-cious Sav - ior and my God, as - sist me to pro-claim,  
 3. Je - sus! the name that calms our fears, that bids our sor-rows cease,  
 4. Glo - ry to God, and praise and love be ev - er, ev - er given

the glo - ries of my God and King, the tri-umphs of God's grace!  
 to spread through all the earth a - broad the hon - ors of your name.  
 is mu - sic in the sin - ner's ears, is life, and health, and peace!  
 by saints be - low and saints a - bove, the church in earth and heaven.

WORDS: Charles Wesley, 1739, alt.

MUSIC: Carl Gotthelf Gläser, 1828; adapt. Lowell Mason, *Modern Psalmody*, 1839AZMON  
CM

1. This lit-tle light of mine, (of mine) I'm gon-na let it shine; (Oh \_\_\_\_ )  
 (of mine) (Oh \_\_\_\_ )

This lit-tle light of mine, (of mine) I'm gon-na let it shine; (Oh \_\_\_\_ )

This lit -tle light of mine, (of mine) I'm gon-na let it shine;  
 (of mine)

let it shine, let it shine, let it shine. (oh, let it shine.)

2. This great joy I have, I'm gon-na let it shine . . .  
 3. Ev-'ry-where I go I'm gon-na let it shine . . .  
 4. All - through the night I'm gon-na let it shine . . .  
 5. repeat st. 1

st. 1-4

A married couple was asleep in bed on a stormy night when they were awakened by a loud knock on the front door. The man crawled out of bed and grumpily went downstairs. When he opened the front door he found a man dripping wet and obviously very drunk who said to him; "Can you give me a push?" To which the man of the house replied sharply; "NO! Go and sober up!" He slammed the door and stormed upstairs. When he got back into bed and explained what had happened his wife was indignant and said to him; "That wasn't a very kind Christian response that man could be in trouble and you have just sent him out into the storm for the rest of the night!" Reluctantly the man got out of bed a second time, put on his coat and went downstairs. He was sure he wasn't going to get any peace until he did something for the man out in the rain. When he got to the front door the rain was pouring down and he could not see the other man. He could hear a faint noise out in the front yard so he called out; "Hello? Are you still there? What can I do to help?" To which the other man replied; "Could you give me a push?" "I'd be happy if I could see you, where are you?" "I'm over here, on your swing!" Sometimes life brings us events where you just shake your head and smile.

On a serious note. Jesus continues to teach on the hillside after delivering the Beatitudes. If Jesus had preached the Sermon on the Mount in Wiscasset, I don't think he would've talked long before someone interrupted to say, "Rabbi, are we talking sea salt... or that fancy Himalayan stuff?" Because around here, salt is not a theory. Salt is on our roads in February. Salt is in the air by the bay. Salt is what keeps the haddock edible and the driveway passable. So when Jesus looks at an ordinary crowd—fisherfolk, laborers, tired parents, folks who weren't sure they were holy enough to matter—and says, "You are the salt of the earth," he's not being poetic. He's being practical. Salt doesn't call attention to itself. No one says, "Wow, what amazing salt you're serving!" If they do, something has gone wrong. Salt works quietly. It preserves. It brings out flavor. It keeps good things from going bad. Jesus doesn't say, "You should try to become salt." He says, "You are." Which is both comforting and challenging. Because salt that stays in the shaker doesn't do much good. And salt that loses its saltiness—Jesus says—is useless. Harsh words.

But honest ones. Around here, we know this: A lighthouse that's turned off is just an expensive decoration. A church that exists only for itself is... well... just a building with nice memories. Salt doesn't exist for itself. Neither does the church. Some churches are like the saltshaker at Red's that never gets refilled. Still technically a saltshaker. Just not contributing much. Salt that stays put is just decoration. We use salt like it's a spiritual discipline. We salt first and ask questions later. Road salt. Salt on the sidewalks. Salt in the air. Salt on everything we own—including things that were once shiny. So when Jesus says, "You are the salt of the earth," no one here thinks, "Oh, how delicate." We think, "Yes... and it's going to leave a mark." Salt changes things—and sometimes it's a little corrosive. Faith that actually shows up will affect its surroundings. That's kind of the point. When Jesus says, "You are the salt of the earth," he is not talking about a tasteful little pinch. Jesus is calling us salt, he's not saying, "Be subtle." He's saying, "Be effective." Around here, salt doesn't ask permission—it just shows up and changes things.

In July, Wiscasset shines. It is the Tourist Season. Everything's open. Everyone's smiling. We are extremely holy from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Then February hits. Jesus doesn't say, "You are the light of the world... when it's convenient." He means even in February. In the middle of dark light, and good news tonight sunset light ends at 5:01 p.m. Whoop ! Whoop! Any light can shine in July. Jesus is talking about letting your light shine even in February.

Imagine a lighthouse along the Maine Coastline when they are fully operating and we see the sign out front says: "Light currently off. But we remain deeply committed to the idea of light. "Symbolic light is great—until you're about to hit the rocks. Jesus doesn't call us to believe in light. He calls us to be light. Jesus says no one lights a lamp and hides it under a bushel basket. Here, that would be like putting a lamp under a lobster trap: heavy, awkward, and smells faintly of regret. Faith buried under fear, politeness, or "we don't want to make waves" doesn't help anyone. Jesus didn't say shine loudly—just shine. Faith buried under "we don't want to rock the boat" is still buried. Then Jesus shifts metaphors:" You are the light of the world. "Notice again—***you are***. Not you might be someday. Light isn't about showing off. It's about helping people find their way home.

For generations, lights along the river and the coast weren't decorative; they were survival. They said: There's land here. There's safety here. In Maine terms: You don't fire up the generator in an ice storm and then turn off all the lights. Light is meant to be seen—not so people admire the bulb, but so they can see where to step next. "So That They May See Your Good Works"-This part makes us nervous. Because we've been taught—rightly—that faith isn't about showing off our goodness. When Jesus teaches about righteousness it means -Going Deeper Than Looking Good. You can paint a boat all you want—if the rot underneath isn't dealt with, it's still going down. Jesus isn't interested in shiny religious surfaces. He's after hearts that hold together when the weather turns. Jesus isn't impressed by a fresh coat of paint on a sinking boat. "Jesus calls us to be salty enough to matter and bright enough to guide—especially in a town like Wiscasset that knows both fog and flavor." Jesus calls us to "Go deeper." Real righteousness isn't about rule-following for its own sake. It's about lives aligned with love—hearts shaped by mercy, communities marked by justice, faith that actually changes how we live with one another. Or as we might say here: It's not enough to look like a church. We're called to live like one. The point is look what love does. Good works aren't about proving anything. They're about revealing something when the church feeds the hungry, shows up for the grieving, advocates for the vulnerable, tells the truth with kindness, keeps loving when it would be easier to withdraw—That's not self-righteousness. That's illumination.

I wish to share with you how one man was both salt and light. Bryan Stevenson grew up poor in a segregated community in Delaware. His grandparents had lived under Jim Crow. He watched how easily the justice system crushed people who had no money, no power, and no voice. He was brilliant enough to leave all that behind—Harvard Law School, prestigious clerkships, a future paved with comfort. Instead, he chose Alabama. In the late 1980s, Stevenson moved to Montgomery to represent people on death row—many of whom had been wrongly convicted, many sentenced as teenagers, many forgotten entirely. Friends warned him not to go. There was no money. No safety net. And plenty of hostility. His office was firebombed. He received death threats. He was handcuffed and held at gunpoint by police simply for being a Black man standing outside at night. He stayed anyway. That's the salt part.

Salt doesn't call attention to itself. It seeps in. It preserves what would otherwise rot. Stevenson kept showing up—to courtrooms, to prison cells, to families who had been told their loved ones were disposable. Case by case, life by life, he changed outcomes. Over 140 people were released from death row because of his work. But then came the light.

Stevenson realized that justice wasn't just about winning cases—it was about telling the truth. So he helped create the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, the first memorial in the U.S. dedicated to victims of lynching. It doesn't let the country look away. It stands in sunlight. It names names. It insists on memory.

Stevenson often says: “The opposite of poverty is not wealth; the opposite of poverty is justice.” “We are all broken by something. But our brokenness can be the source of our compassion.”

- Stevenson didn't abandon a system he could have escaped. He entered it and slowed the decay.
- Stevenson made hidden injustice visible, not to shame, but to heal.
- Stevenson sought transformation: Not just of individuals released from prison—but of a nation being asked to tell the truth about itself.

No miracles with trumpets. No viral social media moment. Just faithfulness, proximity, and courage over decades. That's what Jesus is talking about.

Consider this true account of three neighborhood boys, Salvator, Julio and Antonio, who lived and played in Cremona, Italy, around the mid-1600s. Salvator had a beautiful tenor voice and Julio played the violin in accompaniment as they strolled the piazzas. Antonio also liked music and would have loved to sing along, but his voice squeaked like a creaky door hinge. All the children made fun of him whenever he tried to sing. Yet, Antonino was not without talent. His most prized possession was the pocketknife his grandfather had given him. He was always whittling away on some piece of wood.

One day, during a festival, the boys happened to meet a man named Amati, who happened to be a great violin maker, probably the best in all of Italy or even the entire world... Eventually, Antonio found his way to Amati's house and knocked on the front door. When a servant opened it, the great master heard Antonio's squeaky voice and came to see what he wanted so early in the morning.

"I brought these for you to see, sir," replied Antonio, as he emptied his pockets of the assortment of items that he had carved. "I hope you will look at these and tell me if I have enough talent to learn how to make violins, too." Amati asked the boy, "And why do you want to make violins?" Antonio replied, "Because I love music, but I cannot sing with a voice that sounds like a squeaky door hinge." The great violin maker then said, "The thing that matters most is the song in the heart. There are many ways of making music—some people play the violin, others sing, still others paint wonderful pictures. Each helps to add to the splendor of the world. You are a whittler, but your song shall be as noble as any."

Antonio apprenticed himself to Amati and, over a period of several years, learned every aspect of violin making. Then, when he was good enough at it, he labored many years, making 1,100 violins, trying to make each one better than the one before. Antonio's last name was Stradivari, and anyone who owns a Stradivarius violin owns a true treasure.

The Stradivarius story reminds us that even someone who has a voice like a squeaky door hinge still has something to offer the world. As the great Amati said, there was a song in his heart that needed expression, according to his God-given gift, even though it was different, and perhaps less obvious, than that of his two friends.

## **So What Does This Mean for Us?**

It means: Being salty in conversations that have gone bland or bitter. Being light in places where people feel forgotten or invisible. Showing up—again and again—even when it feels small. Because salt is small. Light often starts small. But both change everything they touch. Jesus doesn't ask us to be everything He asks us to be faithful. To season the world right where we are on 28 High street

Wiscasset since 1773. To shine—not loudly, but clearly. To trust that God can use even ordinary people in ordinary town, to reveal an extraordinary love. So may we be salt on the dock. Light on the hill. A people through whom others glimpse the goodness of God. Which raises the theological question: How do you know salt has lost its saltiness? Answer: someone from Maine tastes it and says, “Yeah... that’s not doing anything.” If your faith can’t change anything, it might be decorative—but it’s not doing the job.

Who is the ‘salt’ of the earth? To follow up in previous scripture of the Beatitudes- They are the humble, the ones who mourn, the meek, and those who thirst after doing what is right in the world. Who is ‘light’? They are the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and those who receive abuse for standing up for what is right. Jesus didn’t call us to be charming. He called us to be useful. We may not be able to sing, play, whittle or make a violin, but if we really want to, we will find a way to let the music out of our hearts and praise God with it. Let the music out!!!

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Reminder:** Rev. John is having a Lord's Prayer Lenten study on 2/25. He will be providing soup that evening, and the consensus is to begin dinner at 5:30, followed by the study. There is no book, no homework, no preparation- just bring yourself and join in conversation and reflection.

**Today Feb 8:** Outreach Fundraising 11:30 in the parlor. Suggestions for missions and fundraising efforts for the year will be discussed. This is a brainstorming session- no commitments required. Everyone is invited and encouraged to attend.

**Feb. 11:** Church Council meeting 6:30 pm. Please contact Cindy Clement for a zoom link to attend virtually.

**Feb, 15:** Congregational Care meeting 11:30 in the parlor to discuss the new CC team bylaw statement, and discuss a plan/ideas moving forward for 2026

### Coming Up This Week

#### Monday, February 9

Rev. John's Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm

Office Hours 9:30am – 1:30pm

Property & Finance Meeting 1:00pm

Mah Jongg 3:00 – 5:30pm

#### Tuesday, February 10

Rev. John's Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm

Office Hours 9:30am – 1:30pm

Sheepscot Valley Chorus 7:00 – 9:00pm

#### Wednesday, February 11

Rev. John's Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm

Office Hours 10:00am – 2:00pm

Organ Society 9:30am

Feed Our Scholars packing 11:00am

Council Meeting 6:30pm ZOOM

#### Sunday, February 15

Sunday Worship 10:00am

Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall following Worship

CC Team Meets After Worship

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