

First Congregational Church

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

An Open and Affirming Church

PO Box 350, 28 High Street, Wiscasset, Maine 04578

207-882-7544, www.uccwiscasset.org



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.



October 12, 2025

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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

FOR YOUR CONTEMPLATION

“The only thing worse than being blind is having sight and no vision.”

Helen Keller

PRELUDE

Trumpet Voluntary

Henry Purcell

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME from Rev. John, ANNOUNCEMENTS from Liturgist

CHORAL INTROIT

Alleluia

Liam Lawton

* CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Whether we live in an apartment or a house; if we reside in the suburbs or the city:

P: God tells us to pray for the places where we live.

L: Whether we are exiles or prisoners for the gospel; if we are young, old, insider, outcast:

P: God says, 'when you search for me, you will find me.'

L: Whether we have been wandering and lost; or if we have lived in the same place all our lives:

P: God says, 'I will gather you from all your places and bring you home.'

* OPENING HYMN

O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing

No. 39

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.

“*” Please stand as you are able.

Bold print indicates congregational spoken or sung responses.

SPIRITUAL NUGGET

‘Physical Challenges’
(Refrain of Dazzling Bouquet)

CHORAL ANTHEM

Come, Share, Rejoice!

Allen Pote

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: Japan

MORNING PRAYER

SILENT MOMENTS FOR PERSONAL 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.

CHORAL RESPONSE

Oh God, Keep Me Safe

Taize

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Jeremiah 29:1,4-7, NRSV Updated

Liturgist: This is the Word of God.

People: Thanks be to God.

SERMON

‘Plans?’

OFFERTORY PRAYER

OFFERTORY

Cavatina

James Southbridge

* 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.

BENEDICTION

BENEDICTORY 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

Trumpet Tune in C Major

David Lasky

You are invited to sit for the postlude.

* * * * *

“Our worship ends, let our service begin”

Minister and Teacher: Rev. John Hogue

Music Director: Joel Pierce

Those serving you today:

Ushers: Jan Shaw and Judith Sutter

Online Streaming: Raegan and Angie Eddy

Reader: Janet Cappers

Flowers: Jan Shaw

**Permission to podcast/stream the music in this service obtained from
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Jeremiah 29:1,4-7

29 These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

4 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: **5** Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. **6** Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. **7** But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

This is the Word of God.

Thanks be to God.

New Revised Standard Version Updated Version

O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing

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

O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee

465

1. O Mas - ter, let me walk with thee in low - ly
 2. Help me the slow of heart to move by some clear,
 3. Teach me thy pa - tience; still with thee in clos - er,
 4. In hope that sends a shin - ing ray far down the

paths of ser - vice free; tell me thy se - cret;
 win - ning word of love; teach me the way - ward
 dear - er com - pa - ny, in work that keeps faith
 fu - ture's broad - ening way; in peace that on - ly

help me bear the strain of toil, the fret of care.
 feet to stay, and guide them in the home - ward way.
 sweet and strong, in trust that tri - umphs o - ver wrong.
 thou canst give, with thee, O Mas - ter, let me live.

WORDS: Washington Gladden, 1879
 MUSIC: Henry Percy Smith, 1874

MARYTON
 LM

Gladden was a Congregational preacher and writer with a social conscience who helped shape the thinking of his generation. From 1904 to 1907 he was National Council of Congregational Churches Moderator.

STEWARDSHIP AND SERVICE

Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7 ‘Plans?’ Rev. John Hogue October 12, 2025

The Pastoral Support transition team recommended I share my story as a minister. I am going to weave it into Jeremiah and today being Disabilities Sunday. First of all, the word Disabilities is a pet peeve of mine. It should be physical challenges Sunday and not disabilities. People judge others to make them disabled. Those of us who have challenges simply have challenges to overcome.

Now our text. Jeremiah writes a letter to his people who are now living in Babylonian exile. Jeremiah continues to battle his rival false prophets who had counselled the people of Judah that they would not be staying in Babylonian exile very long. True to Jeremiah’s character as a prophet, this particular letter may not have been a message that the people wanted to hear.

First, Jeremiah opens his letter as an authentic message by employing the following phrase: “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel.” God was allowing God’s people to go into Babylonian exile because of their sin. They had turned away from God and God’s ways and now therefore had to suffer the consequences—namely, live in Babylonian exile for 70 years.

Jeremiah is saying: “Folks, hunker down where you are right now; make the best of it because you’re going to be there for a while. Don’t believe the false prophets who tell you ‘you’re out of Babylon very soon.’ Rather, live as best you can: plant gardens, build homes and realise that God is with you there, even in exile in a foreign land.”

Sometimes we too may get down in the dumps, perhaps feel sorry for ourselves, and think that we're living in exile and that God has abandoned us. At times, we too may feel like those exiles—foreigners in a foreign land. Allow me to begin my story. When I was born, I was an RH baby and almost died and a blood transfusion saved my life. As I grew older by 15 months, I contracted Spinal Meningitis. It was only when the doctor from Pittsburgh Children's Hospital came to my country hospital that he properly diagnosed me. Prior to the diagnosis, my body temperature rose 105 degrees. It was a frantic attempt to bring the temperature down and into ice cold water I went. We know today we use warm water to bring body temperature down. The ramifications though, was the nerves in my ears split and caused my hearing loss. My second survival. My mother was subjected to physical and verbal abuse by my real father. She left in the night when I was 4 years old with an arm dangling from her body- broken. My grandparents were the caretakers of us while my mother married my stepfather whom I carry his last name with. In my younger years, I had a body hearing aid that I called the bra. The mike was in the center of my chest and wires to my ears. Due to this sight of many folks, I was ridiculed and bullied by classmates. The good thing about these hearing aids, I could always tell who my true friends were. My mother fought for my education to be mainstream and not be in special needs. My spiritual journey was in the Disciples of Christ congregation that nurtured my early faith journey. Then my exile occurred. I lost 11 family members within a year. All my plans to go overseas and learn at Oxford University were derailed. God had other plans for I chose to take care of my dying family. I almost lost my mother who was battling Crohn's disease and she survived

over 30 years of being on TPN to keep her body alive. I was lost. I struggled. My mom and I went to Texas. I survived a steel beam (survival number 3) almost taking my head off while working as a laborer. We came back to PA. I worked for Xerox Corporation and survived a terrible accident that I should not be here today. I was delivering a 1040 copier, a huge mammoth, in a van, when I missed an animal on a gravel road going over the embankment - how I kept from my head going through the windshield and the copier slamming me in the back and not pushing me through the windshield, I will never know.(Survived 4) At this point I questioned everything very hard. I made some stupid mistakes. What I had learned in Seminary was a mystical experience. I cannot describe it but only that it brought peace to my soul. I've had so many other spiritual encounters that are too numerous to mention. However, that mystical experience altered my spiritual outlook and being connected to God. So much so, I entered the ministry and met the love of my life Veronica. I joined the Presbyterian Church USA several years before entering seminary and while going through the process of ordination, the Elders of the Presbytery committee did not feel with my speech impediment that I should be a Minister. Even with my theological persuasion that scholars feel Moses stuttered and led 2 Million people to freedom. At this point, I am more than halfway in Seminary. What should I do? I felt oddly betrayed. Along comes wonderful professor Dr.

Likins, of UCC , said 'check us out.' I did, and took a couple of years with a spiritual mentor. I studied the UCC polity. Then presented an ordination paper in front of 200 of my colleagues. Ecclesiastical Council approved 100% and I was ordained in Nov. 1996. Next year will mark 30 years of ordination. I

share this with you to allow you to see that while it may seem like exile, God was and still is speaking to not just myself but everyone.

We may fight God by trying to erroneously convince ourselves that we want out of this place of exile. Yet, God may be giving us this message—”stay right where you are, make the best of your situation, hunker down, keep on living as faithfully as you can right where you are, serve me where I’ve put you.” That was the case for me.

In this message from God to those Babylonian exiles, there is something quite interesting that Jeremiah is stating: He’s telling them, “keep your hope alive, it isn’t as bad as you might think or believe. Look, be thankful that the Babylonians are giving you enough freedom to own property, build your own homes and produce your own food. Compared with the life of your ancestors in Egyptian slavery, this exile is bearable for you—you can handle it with God’s help. See the hope for you and your children in these everyday, ordinary activities. God is with you in and through all of this if you have the eyes of faith to see God at work.” That too is a message of hope for us. Do we have the eyes of faith to see God at work in and through us as we go about doing the everyday, ordinary activities of life? Don’t give up, there is hope for us in the future if we trust in God.

There is a third radical message from Jeremiah. Those Babylonians, your enemies, are also God’s people; the Gentiles are also blessed by God.” Jeremiah was instructing the Jewish exiles to engage in intercessory prayer for

their enemies and work for their well-being. This message underscores that God is the God of all people—Jew and Gentile. No single racial or ethnic group; no one nation can have a monopoly on the God of all creation. God loves all people and cares for their well-being.

The following true story reveals the power of intercessory prayer on behalf of one's enemies: From the end of World War II to 1991 Albania was under a crushing communist dictatorship. It was more atheistic than even Soviet or Chinese communism. During the nearly 50 years of oppression 1600 churches were destroyed. In 1967 the dictatorship ordered complete religious intolerance. Even private expressions of faith were forbidden. The mere act of dying an Easter Egg (which to most of us hardly seems like a radical confession of Christ) could bring the secret police to your home to carry you away, never to be seen again. During that time Marika Cico and her sister secretly kept the Church alive in their house. [Jim Forest, "Albanian Resurrection," *Touchstone* July/August 2001, p 31] For 23 years, from 1967 to 1991, members of this secret Christian congregation "repeatedly engaged in 'unsleeping prayer'—40 day periods of continuous prayer, each person praying in one or two hour shifts, for the end of persecution." Now at age 95, and nearly blind, Marika has lived to see her prayers answered. She is described as a "fountain of joy."

For 23 years Marika and the church that met in her home prayed shamelessly, persistently, for an end to the persecution. It was a shameless act because it was so ridiculous. Old women, a secret priest, a handful of believers, pitted against the power of a totalitarian state by getting down on

their knees, and crying out to an unseen God for help. It was shameless because they did it over and over when things got worse, and when no help seemed to come.

Can you be inspired now from Jeremiah's letter of encouragement to work for the welfare of others and engage in intercessory prayer. In our state of exile tossed, turned to and from by a growing secular society on the one hand and a violent polarization on the other; God desires our prayers and action. Our contributions of time, talents and money, along with our prayers can and do make a difference—just as they did in Albania and, long ago for those Jews in Babylonian exile. Rather than seeing “the other” as our enemy, may God grant us compassionate hearts and lives to see that we are all in this together; may we continue to be diligent in intercessory prayer for all people, including enemies; may we also be inspired by Jesus to continue to act with kindness and love.

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.

Rev. John can be reached in the church office at 882-7544 during his office hours Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 9am to Noon. He can be reached by text or call at (207) 955-0055. His email address is revjohnwiscassetucc@gmail.com.

Happy October Birthday to Carol Peck, Raegan Eddy, Ann Crispin, Greg Shaw, Thomas Cramer, and Zoe Bigley

Help Yourself Shelf October Wish List

Cereal * Coffee * Soup * Taco Kits * Pasta * Ramen * Canned Pumpkin * Jams & Jellies * Salad Dressing * Cake Mixes * Canned Meats * Pet Food

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today, October 12, Worship and Music Team meets in the parlor, following Coffee Hour.

Church Council meeting has been postponed until October 29.

Starting October 22, study group to discuss Psalm 23 through the reading of the book The Lord is My Shepherd by Rabbi Harold Kushner. Meetings will be in the parlor from 4pm to 5:30pm, followed by a Pot Luck Supper. If you are interested in participating, contact Margot Stiassni to purchase a copy of the book.

Historic Pot Luch Luncheon, Sunday October 26, following worship. Come to discuss important events in the life of the church and the current vision for the church. Sharing remembrances and ideas for future events to further the vision and mission of the church will help Rev. John and newer members and friends understand the importance of the church for all of us.

Sunday, October 12	Choir Practice 8:10am Sunday Worship 10:00am Coffee Hour following worship in Fellowship Hall. Music and Worship Team meeting in the parlor following Coffee Hour
Monday, October 13	Rev. John's Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm Mah Jongg 6:00 – 8:30pm Faith Development Team meeting 6:30
Tuesday, October 14	Rev. John's Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm Sheepscot Valley Chorus 7:00pm in Fellowship Hall
Wednesday, October 15	Rev. John's Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm Organ Society Meeting 9:30am Feed Our Scholars packing 11:00am in the activity room upstairs
Thursday, October 16	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm
Friday, October 17	Maine Conference Annual Meeting @ Pilgrim Lodge
Saturday, October 18	Memorial Service for Wally Roby – 11:00am, followed by a reception in Fellowship Hall Maine Conference Annual Meeting @ Pilgrim Lodge
Sunday, October 19	Choir Practice 8:10am Sunday Worship 10:00am Coffee Hour following worship in Fellowship Hall

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

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Office Administrator: Beth Maxwell*