

First Congregational Church of Wiscasset

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.



March 23, 2025

March 23, 2025
Third Sunday in Lent
10:00am

“The purpose of Lent is not expiation, to satisfy the divine justice, but above all a preparation to rejoice in God’s love. And the preparation consists in receiving the gift of God’s mercy – a gift which we receive in so far as we open our hearts to it, casting out what cannot remain in the same room with mercy.

Now one of the things we must cast out first of all is fear. Fear narrows the little entrance of our heart. It shrinks up our capacity to love. It freezes up our power to give ourselves. If we were terrified of God as an inexorable judge, we would not confidently await God’s mercy, or approach God trustfully in prayer. Our peace, our joy in Lent are a guarantee of grace.”

. . . Thomas Merton in *Seasons of Celebration*

* Indicates to please stand with your heart or your posture as you are able.

We joyfully welcome **all** to our worship today, including those watching on
Zoom!

Those present are invited to Coffee and Conversation in Fellowship Hall
immediately after our worship service!

The First Congregational Church of Wiscasset is an Open and Affirming Church
affiliated with the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ
denomination!

PRELUDE *O For the Wings of a Dove* Felix Mendelssohn

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHORAL INTROIT *Come, Now is the Time to Worship*

* INVITATION TO WORSHIP

We are on a journey of faith.

We travel with Jesus Christ as our guide.

The promises of God shine like a star before us and give strength for the
journey;

But still, in the wilderness, we become impatient and rebellious, we lose our way.

We gather, seeking to be fed by the manna of God's Word, to rediscover the paths of righteousness.

O God, Your Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Glory be to You in Jesus Christ and in the church of all generations.

* HYMN

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

No. 102

INVOCATION

Eternal God, from the beginning of time You have called Your children into communion with You. Yet we confess that like all the rest, we have turned to our own way and refused Your love and grace. Restore to us the joy of knowing You, and of recognizing Your reign among us, through Jesus Christ Who was faithful to the end. Amen.

CHORAL ANTHEM

Wings of the Dawn

Linda Spencer

JOYS AND CONCERNS:

After each Joy or Concern please respond:

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

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

Amen

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Isaiah 43:18 – 25

Mark 2:1 – 12

Liturgist: This is the Word of God.

People: Thanks be to God.

* HYMN

We Are Walking

No. 366

SERMON: "A Little Help From My "Friends" Rev. David C. Myers
Text: "Then some people came, bringing to [Jesus] a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd," from Mark 2:3 and 4

OFFERTORY PRAYER

OFFERTORY *The Lord's Prayer* Albert Malotte

DOXOLOGY No. 46

**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.**

* HYMN *Thy Word Is a Lamp* see insert

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 *The Sun Hath Veil'd His Light* Henry Purcell

You are invited to sit for the postlude.

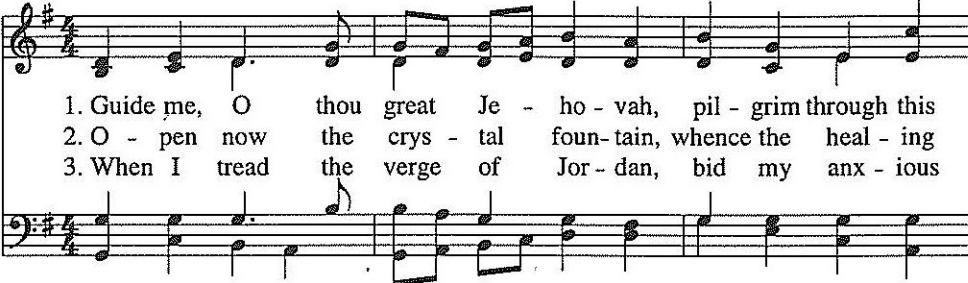
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"Our worship ends, let our service begin"

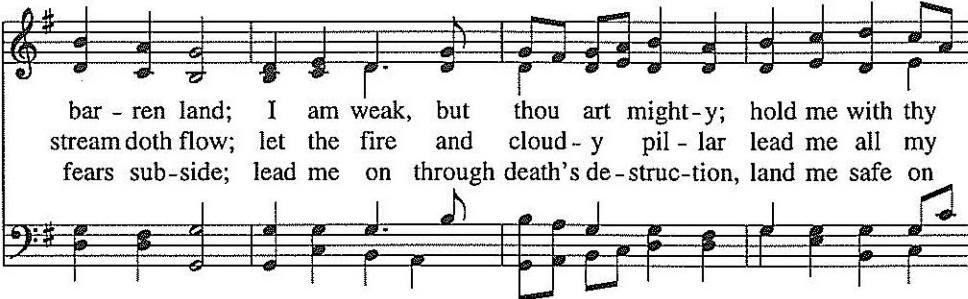
NOTE: Liturgy for today's worship is taken from *Flames of the Spirit: Resources for Worship*. Edited by Ruth C. Duck, The Pilgrim Press, New York, 1985

**Permission to podcast/stream the music in this service obtained from One License with license # A-7314.*

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah



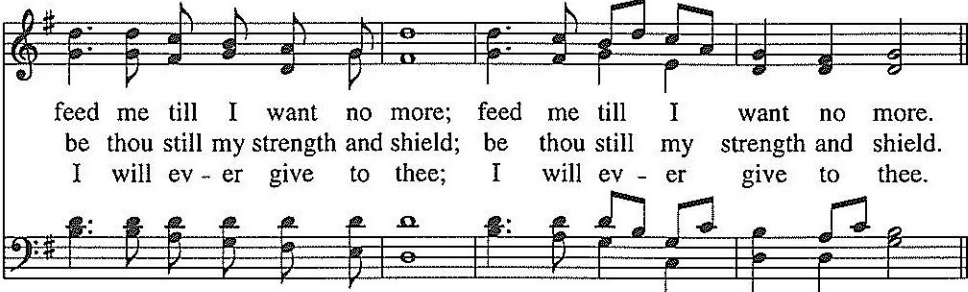
1. Guide me, O thou great Je - ho - vah, pil - grim through this
 2. O - pen now the crys - tal foun - tain, whence the heal - ing
 3. When I tread the verge of Jor - dan, bid my anx - ious



bar - ren land; I am weak, but thou art might - y; hold me with thy
 stream doth flow; let the fire and cloud - y pil - lar lead me all my
 fears sub - side; lead me on through death's de - struc - tion, land me safe on



power - ful hand. Bread of heav - en, bread of heav - en,
 jour - ney through. Strong de - liv - erer, strong de - liv - erer,
 Ca - naan's side. Songs of prais - es, songs of prais - es,



feed me till I want no more; feed me till I want no more.
 be thou still my strength and shield; be thou still my strength and shield.
 I will ev - er give to thee; I will ev - er give to thee.

Mark 2:1 – 12

When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, “Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, “Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and take your mat and walk’? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” —he said to the paralytic— “I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.” And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

Reader: This is the Word of God for the people of God.

People: Thanks be to God

We Are Walking

(Siyahamb' ekukhanyen' Kwenkhos')

We are *walk - ing in the light of God, we are
Si - ya - hamb' e - ku - kha - nyen' kwen - khos', si - ya -

1.

walk - ing in the light of God. We are
hamb' e - ku - kha - nyen' kwen - khos. Si - ya -

2.

walk - ing in the light of the light of God. We are
hamb' e - ku - kha - nyen' kha - nyen' kwen - khos'. Si - ya

walk - ing ham - ba
walk - ing, ham - ba, walk - ing, we are ham - ba, si - ya - ham - ba, walk - ing, we are ham - ba, si - ya -
Oo Oo We are Si - ya -

* marching/singing/dancing/praying

WORDS: South African freedom song; tr. *Freedom Is Coming*, 1984

MUSIC: South African song

This song was first recorded and published in 1980 by the Church of Sweden Mission and the singing group 'Fjedur' after a visit to South Africa.

SIYAHAMBA
Irr.

David C. Myers
March 23, 2025

“A Little Help from My Friends”

Isaiah 43:18 – 25

Mark 2:1 – 12

Text: “Then some people came, bring to [Jesus] a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, . . .” . . . from Mark 2:3 and 4

Mrs. Thelma Scott was my third grade Sunday School teacher at Orono United Methodist Church. I later found out that she was also a former school classmate of my mother; but that’s another story.

I don’t know about you folks, but I still can remember fondly and vividly some of my Sunday School experiences and the lessons Mrs. Scott taught me – even though it happened way, way back – when the Dead Sea was only sick. One of them is this morning’s lesson about the paralytic man being brought to Jesus by his friends. I marveled at this story. Jesus was teaching – at His own house – and the crowd was so great that the four men with their paralytic friend could not get close to Jesus – couldn’t even get in the house Jesus was teaching in. The paralytic man’s friends had to cut a hole in the roof of the house to get their paralyzed friend to Jesus! I never could quite figure out how that could happen without people stopping the

destruction of the roof! When you're 8 or 9 and the only roofs you know about are in the frozen tundra of Central Maine; cutting a hole in the roof is no easy task – to say nothing of how disruptive it might be to those who lived in the house! Even a 9-year-old knew that!

Mrs. Scott explained that, in Israel way back then, the houses were made out of sticks and mud, so it wasn't all that hard to make a hole in the roof and have it repaired. Still, a hole in the roof is a hole in the roof. And this is Jesus' own house; at least this is what the story implies.

Mrs. Scott used that lesson to teach us about what it means to be loyal friends. The author of the Mark Volume of the New Interpreter's Bible, Pheme Perkins reminds us that “the faith of the paralyzed man's four friends initiated the healing encounter.” They did their best impersonation of the old Beatle's song “I Get By With A Little Help From My Friends”.

But this past week, I noticed for the first time something about this favorite story that I had not noticed before: the crowd. This huge crowd had clustered about Jesus. It was so great a crowd that people couldn't even stand near the house to hear what Jesus was saying.

Jesus was speaking the word to the crowd in the house, apparently, Jesus' own house. They were sitting and listening to Jesus teach and preach. The paralyzed man and his friends couldn't even get to the front door.

These weren't just any ordinary people in the crowd around Jesus. We learn later that the crowd included a number of scribes, people who spent

their day studying the scripture, pouring over the word of God – professional religious experts. In other words, these scribes are those on the inside – not just of Jesus’ house, but on the inside of the faith. They are people in the know. Mark doesn’t say they are bad people; in fact, they are probably good people, highly regarded people in that culture. They have heard enough of Jesus to want to come inside his house and hear more from Him. They are patiently listening to Jesus’ words, hoping to gain even more insight into the scriptures they were studying.

In other words, they are just like us. Just like you. You have come to church to hear Jesus preach and teach. You are insiders, the inner circle, and disciples of the Master. You are good people.

And the story says that it was these good, religious, theologically informed, dedicated people – people just like us – who quite unintentionally kept a person in need from getting to Jesus. Outside the house is a paralyzed man in desperate need, his friends trying their hardest to get him some help; . . . and they can’t get to Jesus – because of people like us.

Because of us, there is no way to get in or through the door. They must tear the roof apart, knock a great hole in the house, to get their own needs met by Jesus. Sad, isn’t it, when you have to tear the roof off Jesus’ house to get to Jesus? But sometimes Jesus friends have got Him so covered up and cut off; well, you just do what you have to do!

Now normally, I meet people all the time **who don't want to be around Jesus** – they had a bad experience with the church as a child, they've gone to college, taken a religion course, and now have big doubts, they like to sleep in on Sundays, and on and on go the objections.

This is different! Here is a man in tremendous need who really wants to meet Jesus. A man with a group of friends who want to help him get to Jesus, and they can't get to Jesus because of us, because of the crowd, the inner circle studying the Bible with Jesus.

As I began thinking about this crowd this past week, I realized that this is not the only story where the crowd got in the way. Blind Bartimaeus had to force his way through a crowd to be healed. The woman who hemorrhaged for 18 years had to burst through the crowd. And let's not forget little Zacchaeus who had to climb up a sycamore tree to get a glimpse of Jesus, so great was that crowd in Jericho.

Now this poor man had to get his friends to tear the roof off Jesus' house.

Sometimes, even though Jesus is inviting and open, it just is not that easy to get to Jesus. The crowd gets in the way.

“I'd like to learn more about salvation, as it is found in Jesus,” a high-schooler at a senior High Camp week at Rolling Ridge asked me back in the late 70's.

I talked to her about our doctrine of atonement. I described for her the doctrine of the saving work of Christ on the cross, redemption.

When I finished, she said, “I guess I just don’t have what it takes to understand all that theological stuff.”

And that was the last conversation I had with her. She couldn’t get to Jesus because of the convoluted, contorted reasons put up by a friend of Jesus.

A 12-year-old boy, son of the new preacher, and going to their new church on the first Sunday in September (after Labor Day) – Homecoming Sunday, Christian Education Sunday all rolled into one, eager to meet new friends; went to church. He had on his favorite Boston Red Sox hat. The usher, perhaps not knowing he was the new “minister’s son”, pulled the cap off his head, and spoke loudly enough for several people to hear, “Don’t you know it is disrespectful to wear a hat in church?!? Who brought you up anyway?”

And thus, another person, eager to see Jesus, was prevented from meeting Jesus – because of the crowd.

I think that the church is at another crossroads. Historically, it happens 2 or 3 times a century. It is when the church gets so ingrained at doing what ever it is that churches do; like forming committees, having a different fellowship group for different ages; pretty soon these groups get

institutionalized and they become barriers to people searching for Jesus. I suspect many of us have experienced the words “We always have done it this way!” or the converse, “We never did it that way before!”

How do those people who now list their religious life as “spiritual, but not religious” find satisfaction for the spiritual hunger? Does the church stand in the way?

As a pastor, as someone who has given most of my life to caring for and worrying about the church – and I hate to say this, but it’s true in my experience: the primary reason that people give me for not following Jesus, for not embracing the Christian faith; is us, the church. They can’t get to Jesus, can’t hear what he is saying, can’t see the beauty of Jesus’ way because of us. They can’t experience the healing of Jesus’ touch because the church crowd is in the way.

Which brings us back to the paralyzed man and his four friends who were blocked by a crowd of good church folk. They were barred from Jesus’ healing touch by the good church folk wanting to hear the teachings of their Rabbi.

But that’s not how the story ends. The crowd, all clustered about Jesus, nearly defeated the man and his friends – but not quite. They opened that hole in the roof, and while the crowd stood there with their mouths open, Jesus healed the man. He miraculously told him to get up and walk. And, lo and behold he did! And he went home healed.

Jesus is so unlike us! Jesus didn't care about His roof! He only cared that this paralytic man who had friends that cared so much about him that they wouldn't stop at anything – even a crowd that prevented them from getting close to Jesus – at least by normal means.

And because this was so unusual – well, just what was unusual?

- The fact that the man had been healed?
- The fact that the friends cut a hole in Jesus' roof and that Jesus didn't seem to mind?
- The fact that the friends cared so much that they would not be stopped in getting their friend healed by Jesus?

Well, perhaps you can choose which was the most unusual aspect of this story, but the fact is that what they had witnessed was so unusual that they stood there and with one voice said, “We never saw anything like this.”

Just maybe:

We never saw a Savior Who wanted to reach out beyond His inner circle in order to save.

We never knew a Lord Who took didn't mind having His house wrecked in order that people in need might get in to see Him.

We never saw a Messiah Who reached out beyond the bounds of the saved in order to touch the lost.

We never saw a teacher who demanded that His best students move away from Him and let those in greater need get to Him.

“We never saw anything like this.”

They wouldn't let the crowd stop them.

But why, O why, do we make it so hard for people to get to Jesus?

People in need, people paralyzed and desperate, go ahead, knock a hole in our roof – go ahead – so Jesus can touch you and make you whole.

It's just not fair of us to keep Him to ourselves.

Thy Word Is a Lamp

Refrain (Unison)

Chords: Eb Bb7 Eb

Thy word is a lamp un - to my feet and a

Chords: Ab Bb7 Eb Ab Eb Fine Bb7 Fm

light un - to my path. 1. When I feel a - fraid,
2. Now I will not for - get your

Chords: Cm Gm Ab Bb7 Ab Eb

think I've lost my way, still you're there right be - side me, and
love for me and yet my heart for - ev - er is wan - der - ing.

Chords: Bb7 Fm Cm Gm

noth - ing will I fear as long as you are near.
Je - sus, be my guide and hold me to your side, and

Chords: Ab Bb7 Cm C G Bb7 D.C.

Please be near me to the end.
I will love you to the end.

Those serving you today:
Interim Pastor: Rev. David Myers
Music Director/Organist: Joel Pierce
Ushers: Deane & Susan Attwood
Reader: Margot Stiassni-Sieracki

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Lenten Potluck and Bible Study on people of the Bible.

Sunday Evenings, 5:30 – 7:00pm.

Overview: This Lenten Series, led by Rev. Myers and all who participate, is designed for us to be able to better understand some of the important figures in the Bible. This in turn will help us have a new and better understanding of what human faithfulness means even though we are all people with flaws.

Discussion on what the Bible, its stories and teachings can do for us.

March 16: David.

Suggested readings: I Samuel chapters 16 and 17; II Samuel chapters 11 and 12; Chapter 23:1 – 7; and Psalms 23 and 121

Please bring your favorite foods to share and be ready to eat at 5:30 pm.

Feed our scholars Bake Sale, Sat., March 29, 7:30am – 1:30pm.

Ames Hardware Wiscasset. All proceeds go toward providing weekend bags for participating Wiscasset Elementary School Students.

One Great Hour of Sharing Offering to be taken next Sunday March 30.

Recipe Auction - March 30. Potluck lunch and recipe auction on Sunday, March 30 at 11:30 a.m. hosted by the Organ Society.

Bring your favorite dish with the recipe in a sealed envelope for a potluck lunch and auction after church on March 30.

After enjoying lunch, recipes will be auctioned to the highest bidder.

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 and place it on the plate of offering. It will only be shared with the pastor.

Chair Yoga with Samantha Main

Class Details

- Day: Wednesdays
- Time: 12:00 PM

Overview

Chair Yoga with Samantha is a gentle form of yoga that is practiced sitting on a chair or standing using a chair for support. This class is perfect for those who want to enjoy the benefits of yoga but have limitations with traditional mat-based poses.

Benefits of Chair Yoga

- **Improved Flexibility:** Increases range of motion in joints.
- **Enhanced Balance:** Helps in maintaining balance and preventing falls.
- **Stress Reduction:** Promotes relaxation and mental clarity.
- **Accessibility:** Suitable for all ages and fitness levels, including those with mobility issues.

What to Expect

During the session, Samantha will guide you through a series of movements and breathing exercises designed to promote physical and mental well-being. Each class is structured to accommodate various abilities, ensuring everyone can participate comfortably.

How to Prepare

- **Wear Comfortable Clothing:** opt for something that allows free movement.
- **Hydrate:** Drink water before and after the session.
- **Find Your Space:** Choose a quiet, comfortable area with a sturdy chair.

Join Samantha for a rejuvenating experience that brings the benefits of yoga to everyone, right from the comfort of a chair!

***Sam is a Registered Yoga Teacher with over 200 hours and is a Personal Trainer.**

HELP YOURSELF SHELF WISH LIST

- cereal • coffee • crackers
- baked beans • ramen
- jams & jellies
- canned meats
- salad dressing
- soups & stews
- condiments
- cleaning products

MARCH



Coming Up:

Sunday, March 23:	Choir Practice, 8:10am Sunday Worship – 10:00am Coffee Hour following church in Fellowship Hall. Youth Group, 11:45am Lenten Bible Study and Pot-Luck Supper in Fellowship Hall, 5:30pm.
Monday, March 24:	Mah Jongg, 6:00pm – 8:30pm
Tuesday, March 25:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm Sheepscot Valley Chorus, 7:00pm
Wednesday, March 26:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm Organ Society Meets, 9:30am Feed Our Scholars (FOS) 11:00am Chair Yoga with Samantha Main, 12:00pm
Thursday, March 27:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm
Saturday, March 29:	Rain Date if needed, Sheepscot Valley Chorus, concert rehearsal, 9:30am
Sunday, March 30:	No Choir Practice, 8:10am Sunday Worship – 10:00am <i>(One Great Hour of Sharing Offering)</i> Coffee Hour following church in Fellowship Hall. Youth Group, 11:45am Lenten Bible Study and Pot-Luck Supper in Fellowship Hall, 5:30pm.

Need a ride or Can you provide a ride?

If you need or would be willing to provide a ride to and from church on Sundays for those unable to drive themselves, please call Lisa Hargreaves at 207.315.0802.

Volunteer Opportunity at St. Philip's Church

St. Philip's is looking for volunteers to in the Bargain Basement thrift shop. Contact Sharman Ballantine at sharman1738@gmail.com or 207 481 1043 for more info.