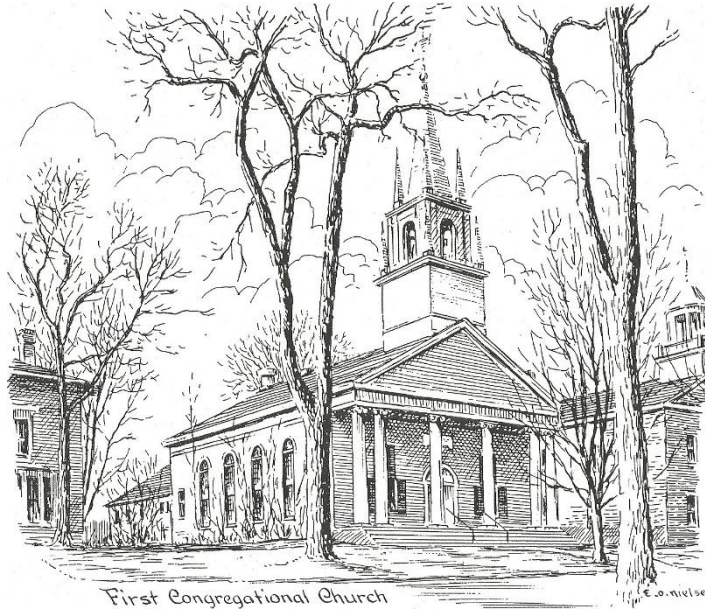


First Congregational Church
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
An Open and Affirming Church



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.

March 22, 2026

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

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: “A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on.” Winston Churchill

PRELUDE *Jesus Calls us, O'er the Tumult* arr. Dale Wood

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS

* CALL TO WORSHIP

L: We come to you spiritually hungry,

All: Word of God, spiritually feed us.

L: There are times when we lose our way; we feel like we are going round in circles, unsure of our next step.

All: Word of God, lead us.

L: When we are stuck in repetitive habits, we know that you have more for us outside of this mediocrity.

All: Word of God, shake us.

L: Parts of our heart are cold towards the world you love. Fill us with your compassion.

All: Word of God, break us.

L: “The word of God is living and active, sharper than any double edge sword.”

All: Feed me with your wisdom, lead us with your love, shake us with your reality, break me with your perspective and rebuild us with your Holy Spirit's power. Amen.

* OPENING HYMN

'Breathe on Me O Breath of God'

No. 220

INVOCATION TO PRAYER

God, we may come to you dry, discouraged, feeling frail or powerless. But we come believing that You have the words of eternal life. Speak to our dry bones, may your word and your spirit give us life, and empower us to speak truth into this world you love. Amen.

JOYS AND CONCERNS: After each joy or concern, Please respond:
Pastor: "God," Congregation: "**Hear our prayer.**"

Poem:

"Those Dry Bones Get Everywhere"

Written by Dave Hopwood, used with permission.

Those dry bones get everywhere.

In the workplaces and job centres, in the homes and high streets, in the schools and colleges.

Those dry bones get everywhere.

In the shops and sports arenas, in the places of entertainment and the centres of leisure.

Those dry bones get everywhere.

Sprinkling their lifeless dust, sapping energy and draining hope,
confusing minds and sowing discontent

Those dry bones get everywhere -

but so does the breath of God, and so does the hopeful life of the Spirit.

Gentle and powerful, rushing and meandering, transforming radically, and little by little, resurrecting, encouraging, stirring, comforting.

Those dry bones get everywhere -

but so does the breath of God.

LIGHTING OF THE PEACE CANDLE

Global Mission Partner Prayer this week: **India**

Prayer For Wiscasset and Surrounding areas:

Invitation to come forward and write a prayer on the board for towns.

Take a post it note and write your prayer for the town(s) and uplift them to God.

MORNING PRAYER

SILENT MOMENTS FOR PERSONAL PRAYER, 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.

The Valley of Dry Bones

37 The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. **2** He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. **3** He said to me, ‘Mortal, can these bones live?’ I answered, ‘O Lord GOD, you know.’ **4** Then he said to me, ‘Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. **5** Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath[[a](#)] to enter you, and you shall live. **6** I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath[[b](#)] in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD.’

7 So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. **8** I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. **9** Then he said to me, ‘Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath:[[c](#)] Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath,[[d](#)] and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.’ **10** I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

11 Then he said to me, ‘Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, “Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.” **12** Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. **13** And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. **14** I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD.’

Matthew 4:4-11

4 But he answered, ‘It is written—“One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”’ **5** Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, **6** saying to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you”,

and “On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.”’ **7** Jesus said to him, ‘Again it is written, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”’ **8** Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; **9** and he said to him, ‘All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.’ **10** Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! for it is written, “Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”’ **11** Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

This is the Word of God.
Thanks be to God.
New Revised Standard Version Updated Version

Minister and Teacher: Rev. John Hogue
Music Director: Joel Pierce

Those serving you today:
Ushers: Angie Eddy +One
Reader: Allison Crosscup
Flowers:
Online Streaming:
Musical Guest: Ray Cornils

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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Happy March Birthday to Tom Clement, Sullivan Joyce, Corinne Joyce, Marjorie Knight, Ann Light and Kent Wusterbarth

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 *

Today March 22: FCCW Youth Group in honor of Women's History Month is collecting a Special Offering for New Hope Midcoast-Working to end domestic abuse, dating violence and stalking.

Reminders: Rev. John will be returning from the mission trip to North Carolina, Tuesday, March 24th. The FCCW Choir will be resuming performances March 29th!

Wiscasset Feed Our Scholars Fundraiser- Saturday March 28th 10:00am-12:00pm. Create a hand crafted basket. Cost is \$20 adults, and \$15 12+. Sign up by March 25@ 207-882-7184. Location Mindful Gardens 62 Middle St. Wiscasset.

Easter Flower Orders

It is once again time to order Easter flowers to decorate our sanctuary for the celebration of Christ's resurrection. Easter is April 5th, so orders for lilies (\$12), tulips (\$9) and hyacinths (\$5) must be in to the church office by **Wednesday, March 25th**. Rev. John is also putting together a live flower arrangement at the altar cross. If you wish to donate to this, specifically, the donation will be \$5. **Order forms** can be found in the back of the sanctuary.

Maundy Thursday April 2

Join us for a Passover Potluck. We will be sharing a potluck meal for the Sedar Meal. Please bring a potluck dish to share. We will eat at 5:30pm, and our Maundy Thursday Service will follow. St. Philip's will be joining us.

Good Friday Service April 3 Service will be noon at St. Philip's.

Coming Up This Week

Monday, March 23

Rev. John Mission Trip

Office Hours 9:30am – 1:30pm

Mah Jongg 3:00 – 5:30pm

Tuesday, March 24

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

Office Hours 9:30am – 1:30pm

Sheepscot Valley Chorus 7:00 – 9:00pm

Wednesday, March 25

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

Saturday, March 28

Wiscasset FOS Fundraiser 10:00am-12:00pm @Mindful Gardens

Sunday, March 29 Palm Sunday

Sunday Worship 10:00am

Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall following Worship

Fundraising Meeting after Worship

First Congregational Church UCC
PO Box 350, 28 High Street, Wiscasset, ME 04578

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revjohnwiscassetucc@gmail.com
Pastoral Care – 207 955-0055

Music Director: Joel Pierce
Sexton: Mary McKinney
Office Administrator: Hilary Atwood

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Church Website – www.uccwiscasset.org



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

March 22

‘Speaking the Truth’ Ezekiel 37:1-14; Heb. 10:14

Rev. John Hogue

My father often told this familiar story to me as a young boy that comes from Aesop’s Fables. It tells the story of a shepherd-boy, who watched a flock of sheep near a village, brought out the villagers three or four times by crying out, “Wolf! Wolf!” and when his neighbors came to help him, laughed at them for their pains. The Wolf, however, did truly come at last. The Shepherd-boy, now really alarmed, shouted in an agony of terror: “Pray, do come and help me; the Wolf is killing the sheep;” but no one paid any heed to his cries, nor rendered any assistance. The Wolf, having no cause of fear, at his leisure lacerated or destroyed the whole flock. This reminds us that there is no believing a liar, even when he speaks the truth. Our scripture text will remind us to always tell the truth or at least not lie.

One of my professors in seminary often said truth is clothed by lies. One day a man named Truth and a man named Lie stood by a river just outside of town. They were twin brothers. Lie challenged Truth to a race, claiming he could swim across the river faster than Truth. Lie laid out the rules to the challenge stating that they both must remove all their clothes and at the count of 3, dive into the freezing cold water and swim to the other side and back. Lie counted to 3, but when Truth jumped in, Lie did not. As Truth swam across the river, Lie put on Truth’s clothes and walked back into town dressed as Truth. He proudly paraded around town pretending to be Truth. Truth made it back to shore, but his clothes were gone and he was left naked with only Lie’s clothes to wear. Refusing to dress himself as Lie, Truth walked back

to town naked. People stared and glared as naked Truth walked through town. He tried to explain what happened and that he was in fact Truth, but because he was naked and uncomfortable to look at, people mocked and shunned him, refusing to believe he was really Truth. The people in town chose to believe Lie because he was dressed appropriately and easier to look at. From that day until this, people have come to believe a lie rather than believe a naked truth.

The moral of this story, and how it applies to modern day society, is that we often either consciously or subconsciously reject certain truths in our personal lives or in the world around us for the sake of our peace of mind. These truths may be in our personal lives: financial issues, relationship issues, struggles with our faith, addiction problems; they are all areas where we often turn our back to the cold hard truth, even if it's at our own peril. We've also seen this in public society as well. Our country is brutally divided among ideological lines on every front. People can be presented with irrefutable yet inconvenient truths regarding societal issues including terrorism, global warming, race relations, cultural differences, and countless other issues, but they shun those truths and decide instead to believe the well-dressed lie, especially if it benefits their agenda or idealistic narrative. The story of Truth and Lie swimming in the river may answer why we do this to ourselves, but what it doesn't answer is when and if we will ever learn from it.

In our scripture context, in times of crisis they would bring to mind their experience in the desert and use it as a lens for seeing how God might act in their present trouble. This was certainly the case when Israel was taken into exile by Babylon in 597 BC. There could have been no greater crisis than to be ripped out of the "promised land" and ten years later to have the city and its temple destroyed. God's

people were distraught. And yet prophets like Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel tried to remind the people that, even in the desert of exile, they could still rely on the God who had brought them through the wilderness. In Ezekiel's vision, the people are not simply hungry and thirsty in the desert of exile. They are dead, their bodies have rotted away, and only their bones are left on the dry, dusty desert floor. Yes, a rather disgusting image. But this is the extent of Israel's despair. Look at verse 11:

Does that image of exile relate to the despair you sometimes feel about the world around you? About our society, and a church that seems increasingly marginalized and ignored? If it resonates with you at all, then you can take heart from what happens through Ezekiel.

God calls Ezekiel to speak to the dead bones. He speaks God's creative, restorative word, and the dead bones come together, muscles and flesh grow back over them. He speaks again and God's life giving Spirit comes and brings life to the dead. "So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army." (Ezekiel 37:10) The dejected, dead people of Israel are resurrected. They become an army, a people who will re-occupy their promised land. God's Word and his Spirit do what no other power, politician, product or program could do - bring new and true life.

If we are looking to bring transformation to the world around us - to our churches, to our homes, to our workplaces, our pubs, our schools - we need to know God's word and we need to speak it in the power of his Holy Spirit. It means speaking God's truth in love. It means praying with prophetic faith - speaking out God's word with

the trust that it will be effective. It means reminding ourselves of God's promises whenever we get dejected.

When Jesus is led into the desert, it seems that he also understands his 40 days in the light of Israel's 40 years of wilderness wandering. When we looked at Deuteronomy 8 we saw that the reason God gives for Israel's wilderness wanderings was: "to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." (Deuteronomy 8:3) Each time Jesus is tempted by the devil he responds by quoting the word of God - in fact he even uses scriptures from Deuteronomy which refer to Israel's wilderness testing (8:3, 6:13, 16). So Jesus stands where Israel fell. And in doing so he shows us Christians - the New Israel - how we can also stand in the face of temptation.

Up in central Maine—not far from the old paper mill towns along the Kennebec—there was a mill that shut down almost overnight. One week the whistle blew at 7 a.m. The next week it was silent. Storefronts emptied. Houses went up for sale. Folks said, "That town's done. It's bones." If you drove through, it looked like Ezekiel's valley—dry beams, rusted conveyors, cracked pavement. You could almost hear the wind moving through empty loading docks. People argued about why it happened. Some blamed outsiders. Some blamed regulations. Some blamed "the way things used to be." Everyone had an opinion. But very few wanted the truth. Years later, a small group began meeting in the old town hall. No slogans. No quick fixes. They asked hard questions: What really happened? What do we need to repent of? What skills do we still have? What is actually possible now—not in 1978, but today? They stopped chasing nostalgia and started seeking truth. It wasn't dramatic. It was slow. Training programs. A new small manufacturer. Local

entrepreneurship. And one day, a different kind of whistle blew. The town didn't go back to what it was. But it breathed again.

In Book of Ezekiel 37, God walks Ezekiel into a valley of dry bones and asks, "Son of man, can these bones live?" It's almost a cruel question.

Ezekiel doesn't offer optimism. He doesn't offer despair.

He says, "Sovereign Lord, you alone know." That's prophetic humility.

Then God says something astonishing: "Prophesy to these bones."

Speak truth into what looks irreversibly dead.

Notice: the bones don't come together because Ezekiel feels hopeful.

They come together because God's word is spoken.

The prophetic task is not positive thinking.

It is truth-telling.

And sometimes truth first sounds like judgment:

"These bones are very dry." But then comes promise:

"I will put breath in you, and you will live."

In Gospel of Matthew 4, Jesus stands in another kind of valley—the wilderness. The tempter offers shortcuts:

- Turn stones into bread.
- Throw yourself down—prove yourself spectacularly.
- Take the kingdoms without the cross.

Each temptation bends truth just enough to sound reasonable.

"Isn't bread good?"

"Doesn't Scripture say angels will protect you?"

"Wouldn't power help you do good?"

But Jesus answers with Scripture rightly understood:

“Humans shall not live on bread alone...”

“Do not put the Lord your God to the test...”

“Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.”

The enemy quotes Scripture too—but twists it.

Prophetic faith requires discernment.

Not every voice that sounds biblical is truthful.

Not every solution that sounds practical is faithful.

In both passages, the issue is truth. In Ezekiel, the lie would be despair:

“It’s over. These bones are finished.” In Matthew, the lie would be distortion:

“You can fulfill your mission without suffering. Without obedience. Without trust.”

One valley tempts us to give up. The other tempts us to cheat. Both require speaking and seeking truth.

How do we define this in Maine terms? We know valleys in Maine.

- Closed mills. Empty pews. Young people are moving away.
- Political noise louder than neighborly wisdom.

We also know wilderness seasons—when faith feels thin and bread feels urgent. The prophetic call is not to nostalgia. Not to panic. Not too flashy spiritual shortcuts.

The call is to seek truth. Truth about where we are. Truth about our compromises.

Truth about God’s promises. Ezekiel teaches us: speak God’s word even when the landscape looks dead. Jesus teaches us: cling to God’s word when the shortcuts look attractive.

The valley is not revived by denial. The wilderness is not conquered by appetite. Dry bones live when God's truth is spoken. Temptation is defeated when God's truth is trusted. And here is the prophetic edge for today:

If we want breath again—in our churches, our towns, our own souls—we must love truth more than comfort. Because the same Spirit who rattled bones together is the same Spirit who strengthened Christ in the wilderness.

And that Spirit still asks: "Will you speak what is true?"

In Maine—or anywhere—revival does not begin with noise.

It begins with truth.

Breathe on Me, Breath of God

1. Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life a - new
 2. Breathe on me, Breath of God, un - til my heart is pure,
 3. Breathe on me, Breath of God, till I am whol - ly thine,
 4. Breathe on me, Breath of God, so shall I nev - er die,

that I may love what thou dost love, and do what thou wouldst do.
 un - til with thee I will one will to do and to en - dure.
 un - til this earth - ly part of me glows with thy fire di - vine.
 but live with thee the per - fect life of thine e - ter - ni - ty.

WORDS: Edwin Hatch, 1886, alt.
 MUSIC: Robert Jackson, 1894

TRENTHAM
 SM

Anglican Edward Hatch ministered and taught in Canada and England.
 This hymn, first published in his *Between Doubt and Prayer*, shows
 this scholar could also be simple and unaffected.

Precious Lord, Take My Hand

1. Pre-cious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand,
 2. When my way grows drear, pre-cious Lord, lin-ger near,
 3. When the dark-ness ap-pears and the night draws near,

I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
 when my life is al-most gone,
 and the day is past and gone,

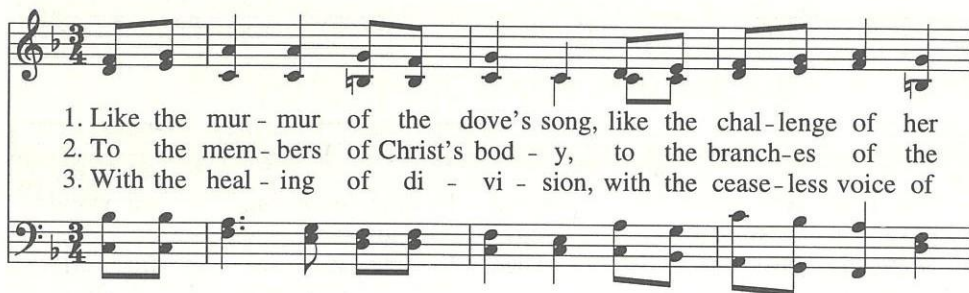
through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light:
 hear my cry, hear my call, hold my hand lest I fall:
 at the riv-er I stand, guide my feet, hold my hand:

Take my hand, pre-cious Lord, lead me home.

Be still, my soul: your best, your heav-en-ly friend
 Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know
 Be still, my soul: when change and tears are past,

through thorn-y ways leads to a peace-ful end.
 the voice that calmed them in this world be-low.
 all safe and bless-ed we shall meet at last.

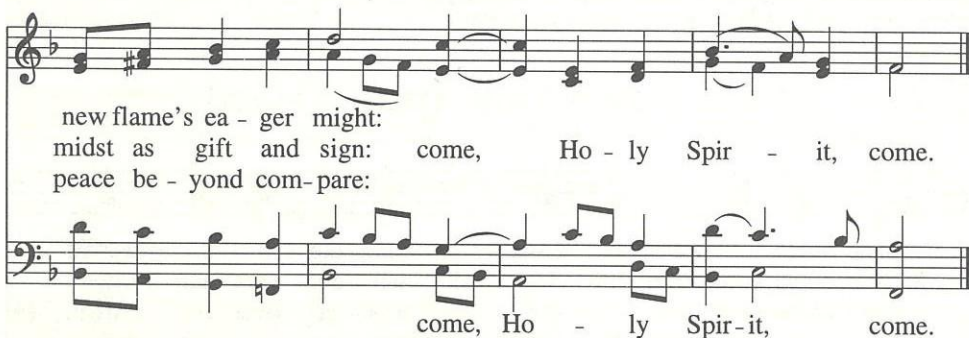
Like the Murmur of the Dove's Song 230



1. Like the mur - mur of the dove's song, like the chal - lenge of her
 2. To the mem - bers of Christ's bod - y, to the branch - es of the
 3. With the heal - ing of di - vi - sion, with the cease - less voice of



flight, like the vig - or of the wind's rush, like the
 Vine, to the church in faith as - sem - bled, to our
 prayer, with the pow'r to love and wit - ness, with the



new flame's ea - ger might:
 midst as gift and sign: come, Ho - ly Spir - it, come.
 peace be - yond com - pare:
 come, Ho - ly Spir - it, come.

WORDS: Carl P. Daw, Jr., 1982
 MUSIC: Peter Cutts, 1969

BRIDEGROOM
 87.87.6

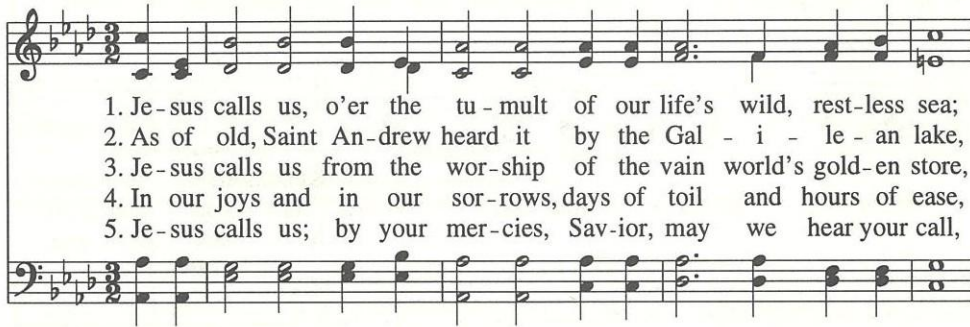
Composer Peter Cutts, coming from a United Reformed Church background in England, has served on the UCC's Andover-Newton Seminary faculty.

Words © 1982, music © 1969
 Hope Publishing Co.

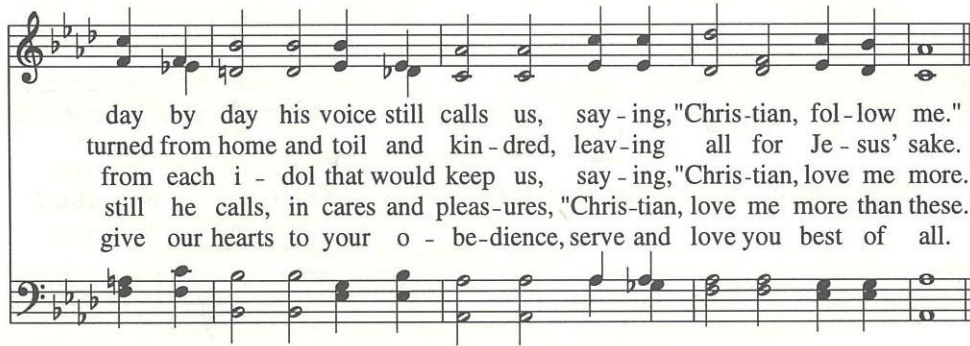
GOD PRESENT IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus Calls Us, O'er the Tumult

304



1. Je-sus calls us, o'er the tu-mult of our life's wild, rest-less sea;
2. As of old, Saint An-drew heard it by the Gal - i - le - an lake,
3. Je-sus calls us from the wor-ship of the vain world's gold-en store,
4. In our joys and in our sor-rows, days of toil and hours of ease,
5. Je-sus calls us; by your mer-cies, Sav-ior, may we hear your call,



day by day his voice still calls us, say - ing, "Chris-tian, fol-low me."
turned from home and toil and kin-dred, leav-ing all for Je - sus' sake.
from each i - dol that would keep us, say - ing, "Chris-tian, love me more."
still he calls, in cares and pleas-ures, "Chris-tian, love me more than these."
give our hearts to your o - be-dience, serve and love you best of all.

WORDS: Cecil F. Alexander, 1852, alt.
MUSIC: William H. Jude, 1874

GALILEE
87.87

Cecil Humphreys' marriage to William Alexander, later archbishop of Armagh, brought together two people with superb literary talents. This hymn was inspired by the call of the disciples in Matthew 4:18-20.

INVITATION TO DISCIPLESHIP