

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.



August 10, 2025

August 10, 2025
Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
10:00am

* Indicates to please stand with your heart or your posture.

We welcome **all** to our worship service whether present or on streaming video!
The First Congregational Church of Wiscasset is an Open and Affirming Church
affiliated with the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ denomination.
All are invited to gather in Fellowship Hall immediately following worship for
Coffee, Refreshments and Conversation.

For Your Contemplation:

“God uses authority to love people into goodness; to God no person ever becomes a thing. We must use such authority as we have always to understand and always at least to try to mend the person who has made the mistake.” . . . William Barkley

PRELUDE *Selections from the Bach Cello Suites* J. S. Bach
David Sieracki, cello

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHORAL INTROIT *He Is Exalted* Twila Paris

* INVITATION TO WORSHIP

The Spirit of God moves among us, binding us in covenant with faithful people
of every time and place.

**The Spirit moves within us, empowering us to proclaim the gospel to all
people.**

The Spirit moves through us, making us channels of God’s love.

**As we gather to worship, we open ourselves to the Spirit of the living God
made known to us in Jesus Christ.**

* HYMN *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling* No. 404

UNISON PRAYER

God of us all, since You are always present to us, enfolding us in Your love, pursuing us with goodness and mercy all the days of our lives, we admit that we may be sometimes perplexed, but we never despair. We thank You that You have come to us in Jesus Christ, the healer and liberator, showing us Who You are. Your light, shining in the face of Christ, is reflected in our hearts. As we see You in Jesus, may others see Christ in us, to the glory of Your Name and love. Amen!

CHORAL ANTHEM

Down to the River to Pray

arr. Sheldon Curry

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

Calm to the Waves

SCRIPTURE LESSON

John 7:53 – 8:11

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

People: Thanks be to God!

* HYMN OF PREPARATION

It’s Me, It’s Me, O Lord

No. 437

SERMON:

“A Stance for Forgiveness”

Rev. David Myers

Text: Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go and do not sin again”.

(John 8:11b)

OFFERTORY PRAYER

OFFERTORY

Selections from the Bach Cello Suites

J. S. Bach

David Sieracki, cello

* PRESENTATION WITH 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

This Is the Day of New Beginnings

No. 414

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

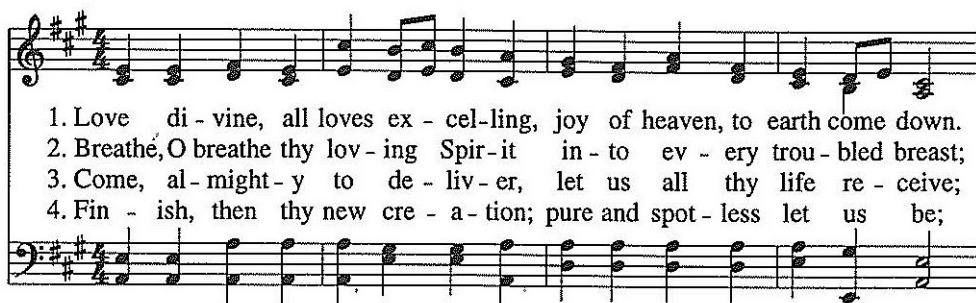
Thy Word

arr. Mark Hayes

You are invited to sit for the postlude.

* * * * *

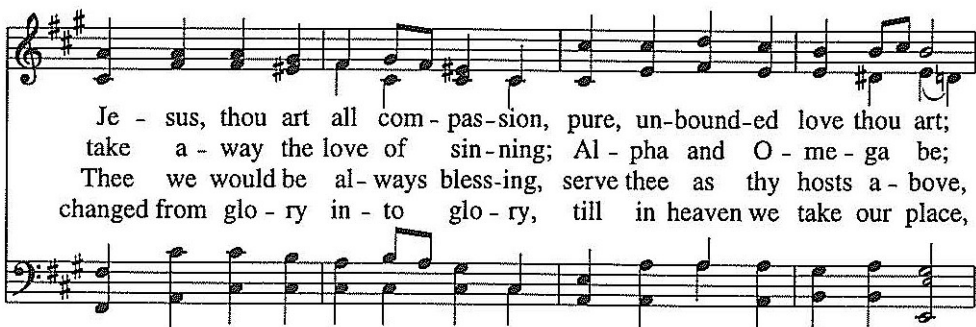
“Our worship ends, let our service begin”



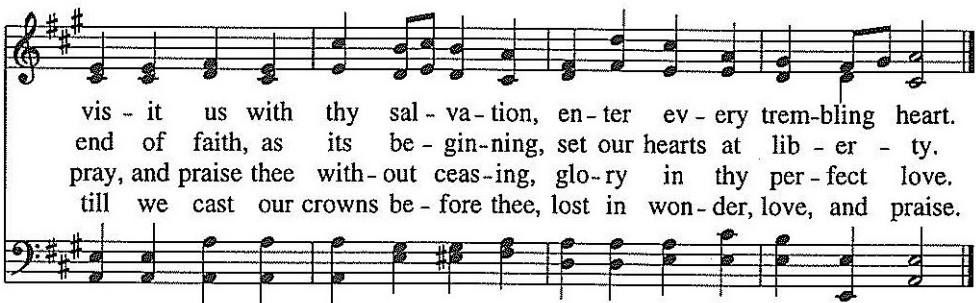
1. Love di - vine, all loves ex - cel-ling, joy of heaven, to earth come down.
 2. Breathe, O breathe thy lov - ing Spir - it in - to ev - ery trou - bled breast;
 3. Come, al - might - y to de - liv - er, let us all thy life re - ceive;
 4. Fin - ish, then thy new cre - a - tion; pure and spot - less let us be;



fix in us thy hum - ble dwell - ing, all thy faith - ful mer - cies crown;
 let us all in thee in - her - it, let us find thy prom - ised rest;
 sud - den - ly re - turn, and nev - er, nev - er - more thy tem - ples leave.
 let us see thy great sal - va - tion per - fect - ly re - stored in thee;



Je - sus, thou art all com - pas - sion, pure, un - bound - ed love thou art;
 take a - way the love of sin - ning; Al - pha and O - me - ga be;
 Thee we would be al - ways bless - ing, serve thee as thy hosts a - bove,
 changed from glo - ry in - to glo - ry, till in heaven we take our place,



vis - it us with thy sal - va - tion, en - ter ev - ery trem - bling heart.
 end of faith, as its be - gin - ning, set our hearts at lib - er - ty.
 pray, and praise thee with - out ceas - ing, glo - ry in thy per - fect love.
 till we cast our crowns be - fore thee, lost in won - der, love, and praise.

John 7:53 – 8:11

Then each of them went home, while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning He came again to the temple. All the people came to Him and He sat down and began to teach them.

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?’ They said this to test Him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him.

Jesus bent down and wrote with His finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning Him, He straightened up and said to them, ‘Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.’ And once again He bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before Him.

Jesus straightened up and said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ She said, ‘No one, sir.’ And Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.’

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

People: Thanks be to God!

It's Me, It's Me, O Lord (Standin' in the Need of Prayer)

Refrain

It's me (it's me), it's me, O Lord, stand-in' in the

need of prayer. It's me (it's me), It's me O Lord,

Fine

stand-in' in the need of prayer.

1. Not my broth - er, not my
2. Not the preach - er, not the
3. Not my fa - ther, not my
4. Not the strang - er, not my

It's me,

sis - ter, but it's me, O Lord, stand - in' in the
dea - con, but it's me, O Lord, stand - in' in the
moth - er, but it's me, O Lord, stand - in' in the
neigh - bor, but it's me, O Lord, stand - in' in the

it's me O Lord

need of prayer. Not my broth - er, not my sis - ter, but it's
need of prayer. Not the preach - er, not the dea - con, but it's
need of prayer. Not my fa - ther, not my moth - er, but it's
need of prayer. Not the strang - er, not my neigh - bor, but it's

It's me, it's

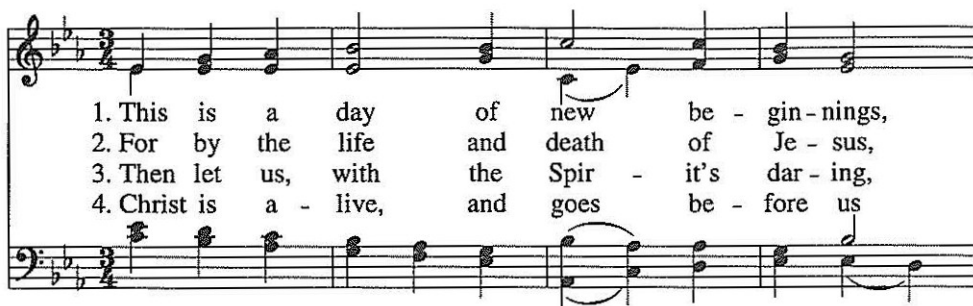
to Refrain

me, O Lord, stand-in' in the need of prayer.

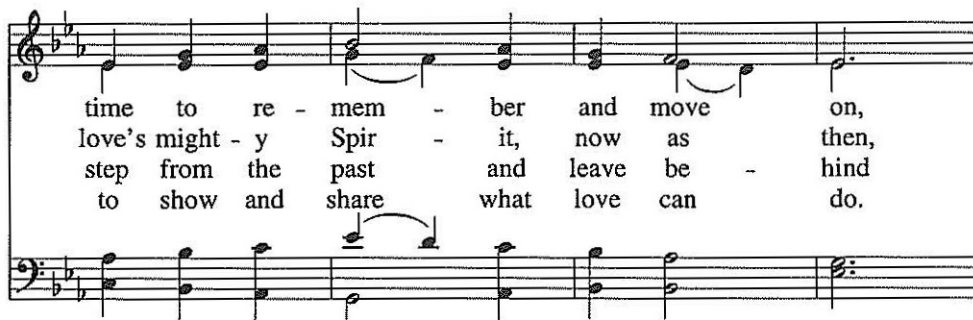
me, Lord,

This Is a Day of New Beginnings

414



1. This is a day of new be - gin - nings,
 2. For by the life and death of Je - sus,
 3. Then let us, with the Spir - it's dar - ing,
 4. Christ is a - live, and goes be - fore us



time to re - mem - ber and move on,
 love's might - y Spir - it, now as then,
 step from the past and leave be - hind
 to show and share what love can do.



time to be - lieve what love is bring - ing,
 can make for us a world of dif - f'rence
 our dis - ap - point - ment, guilt and griev - ing,
 This is a day of new be - gin - nings -



lay - ing to rest the pain that's gone.
 as faith and hope are born a - gain.
 seek - ing new paths, and sure to find.
 our God is mak - ing all things new.

WORDS: Brian Wren, 1978, rev. 1987
 MUSIC: Brian Wren; arr. Peter Cutts, 1978

DRONFIELD
 98.98

“A Stance for Forgiveness”

John 7:53 – 8:11

Text: Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more.”

. . . John 8:11

For years, even decades, Martin Marty, a church historian and theologian from the University of Chicago, wrote a column in the *Christian Century*. A couple of times a year he would share with his readers some bloopers that occurred in churches bulletins and church newsletters. I wish to share with you some excerpts Marty has culled from other church bulletins and newsletters.

- A Michigan church listed this announcement: “This afternoon there will be a meeting in the south and north end of the church. Children will be baptized at both ends.”
- An Ohio church is having “a Sinspiration led by none other than their choir director.” Perhaps they will sing a hymn that was listed in the church bulletin from a Florida church, “O For A Thousand Tongues to Sin.”

- From a rural church in Maine: “The service will close with the old favorite hymn, “Little Drops of Water”; one of the women in the choir will start quietly and the rest of the congregation will join in.”
- And my favorite is from a Texas church, “Thursday at 7 pm there will be a meeting of the New Mother’s Club. All wishing to become new mothers will please meet with the minister in his study.” . . . hmmmmm, I wonder if the minister was a woman.

This moment of levity illustrates that we are people with imperfections. I think it almost superfluous to say that none of us is perfect, and that – from time to time – we stand in need of forgiveness.

This morning’s Scripture Lesson is an example of Jesus’ stance of forgiveness. It is the familiar story of the woman caught in the **very** act of adultery. It raises four issues, all intertwined with each other, all that need some examination. The first is the phrase, “**caught** in the very act of adultery.” The second is the none-to-subtle sexism that permeates the passage. The third is exposing the trap set to try to charge Jesus as a fraud. And the fourth is the stance of authority exhibited by the religious leaders that could only lead to hypocrisy and condemnation, as opposed to the stance of forgiveness that Jesus shows us.

Let me quickly deal with the first two – the phrase “**caught** in the very act of adultery” and the sexism exhibited throughout the passage.

We are told that a woman was caught in the very act of adultery and brought before Jesus by the scribes and Pharisees. There is no mistaking the

words – she was caught, and there is no doubt in this passage that she was guilty.

But how was she caught? I mean, just how do you go about catching a person in the very act of adultery?

All the grammatical construction in the original Biblical language seems to indicate that the “catching” was no accident. Her husband just didn’t happen to come home early from work one day and stumble upon some chance encounter where she had been swept away by passion extra-ordinaire. There was a concerted effort made – by whom we do not know – to catch this woman in the act of adultery.

But if she is caught in the act of adultery, . . . well, where is the man with whom she indulged in adultery? If she was caught, he had to be caught too! How does he get off scot-free? According to Leviticus 20:10 he is as guilty as she, and the punishment is not exactly trivial: “. . . both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death.” But we never hear of any punishment or penalty imposed on the man. To me, the sexism here is obvious. In the first century society, it was a frequent occurrence that the woman is punished while the man is not held accountable. Sexism predominated in that very male-dominated, paternalistic society – just like it is the sexism in our own time that elicited the chuckle about the bulletin blunder about the New Mother’s Club.

The second instance of sexism in this passage is once the woman is before Jesus, there is no consideration as to what the circumstances might be

that led her to this act. We do know that there was an intentional effort to catch her, but is there more to the situation than we realize? Was she forced into it? Was her husband abusive? Or was she simply an adulterer?

We don't know. And the reason we don't know is because the scribes and the Pharisees had no real interest in her or her circumstances – they were only interested in the fact that she was convenient to something more important to them – namely, that she could be **used to put Jesus in a tough situation**. The Pharisees were the keepers of the Deuteronomic Law – the religious laws given to Moses by God and further codified in the Book of Leviticus. And they were threatened by Jesus – this very popular rabbi who was challenging their emphasis on the details of the law. They were not looking on this woman as a person at all; they were looking on her only as a “thing”, an instrument, whereby they could formulate a charge against Jesus.

And now I digress.

Many of you know that I love to play golf – or, perhaps, better, I love to play **at** golf. Even though I taught my son, Nate, who is the Golf Pro and Director of Golf Instruction at the Ipswich CC, I am not even a remotely good match for him now. If you watched me play you would know that what I do on the golf course could better be described as “a systematic exploration of the geographical terrain on either side of the fairway.” At any rate, one day I was exploring well-manicured terrain with my good friend Ellis Johnson when – because of our need to continually hunt for our golf balls – we were being

overtaken by a real golfer. Well, at least he looked like a real golfer – it was obvious that his clubs cost more than our cars. He politely asked if he could play a few holes with us.

For the high handicap golfer, this is always a tough moment, golf decorum says, “ya gotta do it,” but . . . you really don’t want to. For it is quite one thing to humiliate yourself in front of friends, it’s quite another to do it in the presence of total strangers, especially total strangers who look, for all intents and purposes to be very good golfers.

As we came to the next tee, our worst fears were realized – this was a real golfer. He teed off first, and hit the ball about 290 yards straight down the middle of the fairway. I mean, he might as well have walked out there 290 yards to where he wanted the ball to be and just drop it there!

Feeling the tension grow, Ellis decided to ask our new partner if he would watch our swings and give us a couple of pointers. Well, at least by admitting the deficiencies in our golf game could eliminate some of the internal pretense and perhaps take off the pressure of *having* to hit a “good” one! After all, Ellis and I would try anything to diffuse the embarrassment of a muffed shot. So I got up to the tee, and took a few practice swings, and proceeded to hit a worm-burner about 75 yards down and deep into the rough to the right of the fairway. With a deep sense of embarrassment, I turned and asked the “real golfer” what I did wrong. Then this “real golfer” said some of the truest yet kindest words that could ever be said to a real duffer, “From certain stances you simply cannot hit the ball.”

Humiliated, yet knowing the truth when I heard it, I contemplated on the “real golfer’s” comment for days. I came to realize there is a strong truth in what he said about all of life. When we take a particular stance it eliminates other things from happening. And applying that to our faith; from certain stances, we simply cannot put the Christian faith into practice. And the stance of the scribes and the Pharisees toward the woman was one that prohibited God’s grace.

Theirs was a stance of authority. The scribes and Pharisees were the legal experts of the day. They believed that their function as one in which it give them the right to stand in judgment over others, to watch for every mistake and every deviation from the law, and then issue the letter of the law as a form of punishment. And, now at the Temple in Jerusalem – the very center of their faith - this was their chance to both get this adulteress and, **their real target**, Jesus – the charismatic, popular threat to **their** religion.

But there was a problem. The Romans had taken the death penalty away from the Jews; so punishing the woman was not the real issue here.

The real issue was that this became an opportunity to trap Jesus. Because if Jesus upheld the Law of Moses, He would be defying the Roman authorities and could be removed from the scene. On the other hand, if Jesus did not have the woman stoned the religious people would perceive him as a fraud.

So, what did Jesus do?

Jesus bent down and wrote in the dirt with His finger. Now, scholars have attempted for years to figure out what Jesus wrote. Some postulate that He was writing the sins of the accusers in the dirt. But the fact that what He wrote is not recorded seems to indicate that it was not all that important. Perhaps it was little more than an attempt to get His thoughts together, or to “count to ten” in an attempt to muffle His anger about the situation and the rigidity and insensitivity of the scribes and Pharisees.

At any rate, when Jesus arose; He assumed a stance for us to see God’s all-pervasive forgiveness. He simply said, “Whoever is without sin may cast the first stone.”

Now, if I were in that crowd, I certainly could not be the one throwing the first stone – nor could you. And eventually it dawned on the scribes and Pharisees that even they could not either. The woman was spared.

And this is an awkward moment, for, as far as we know, she never asked for forgiveness – indeed, the only words she speaks in the whole story are, “No one, Lord.” when asked if anyone condemned her.

And then Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go and do not sin again.”

It wasn’t cheap forgiveness; there is a clear command not to sin again.

But it was grace. Jesus freed her from being an object; a tool of the Pharisees, and at the same taught us something about authority. William Barclay said, “God uses authority to love people into goodness; to God no

person ever becomes a thing. We must use such authority as we have always to understand and always at least to try to mend the person who had made the mistake; . . .”

And the other awkward part of all of this is that we don’t know if the woman succeeded in following Jesus command to go and not sin again, or if she continued to sin. Given the fact that she was a human being, I suspect the latter; whether it was the sin of adultery is another issue. But the fact is we don’t know. We do not know if her life turned around or not. We only know that Jesus happened on a scene where an unknown adulteress was about to be stoned, and forgave her. He didn’t take into consideration whether or not she might sin again.

Well, I think this is an appropriate lesson for us to reflect on just what it is to be the church *and* how our faith calls us to act. For the church, above all else, is the Body of Christ and we are parts of that Body reflecting Christ’s teachings and lessons. And perhaps one of the toughest lessons that we have to learn and re-learn is this forgiveness and grace business. It is so easy to condemn, so easy to find fault, so easy to stand above another and pass judgment.

It’s never easy to offer grace and forgiveness to one who has wronged you, or to one who violates your moral code.

And it’s even harder to see how we get caught into patterns of behavior that go beyond our individual behavior. It is also important to see how Jesus

calls attention to the sexism of that (and, I might add) our society. It is also important to see how very good religious people (perhaps like you and I) hide behind their faith to pass moral judgment.

Well, I don't know about you, but every now and then as I go about my everyday life feeling comfortable and perhaps a little bit smug about who I am and my own behavior, I find I need this corrective. Indeed, our faith is all about grace, acceptance and forgiveness. And that is why we pray, "Forgive us our debts/ sins/ trespasses as we forgive our debtors/ those who sin or trespass against us."




**WISCASSET
SET FOR SUCCESS**
AUGUST 17, 2025 1-3 PM
Grades Pre K-12

Wiscasset Community Center

**FREE BACKPACKS
& SCHOOL SUPPLIES**

SHOP OUR WISH LIST:

tinyurl.com/WiscS4S 

GET INVOLVED, JOIN THE FUN!

feedourscholars@gmail.com



WiscassetFeedOurScholars

Those serving you today:
Interim Minister: Rev. David Myers
Music Director/Organist: Joel Pierce
Ushers: Becky & David Lenz
Reader: Linda Wallace
Flowers: Linda Wallace

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

LISTENING FOR THE WORD OF GOD

A Bible Study, started in June Continues. . .

Held Wednesday mornings at 9:00am in the church parlor, led by Rev. Dave Myers. Bring your favorite translation and we will discuss the scripture reading for the upcoming Sunday. You might even hear a thought you express in Sunday's sermon!

If you are interested but not able to attend in the morning, please let Cindy Clement know - she would be happy to lead a second discussion in the evening either in person or via Zoom. Passage for this Wednesday is II Corinthians 5:6 - 13.

Sunday August 17, Set4Success (FOS) Shop @ Wiscasset Community Center, 1-3pm.

Set For Success provides to all so that any who struggle to prepare for the start of school need not worry.

Rental Sunday August 17: Fellowship Hall 1-5pm, Wiscasset Female Charitable Society.

Happy Birthday to all church members with August Birthdays.
Cindy Clement, Beth Whitney, Bill Sutter, Judith Sutter, Janet Cappers,
Scott Murray, Jim Spurlin. Happy Birthday!

Sunday, August 10:	Choir Practice, 8:10am Sunday Worship – 10:00am Coffee Hour following church in Fellowship Hall.
Monday, August 11:	Mah Jongg, 6:00 – 8:30pm
Tuesday, August 12:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm
Wednesday, August 13:	Bible Study , A discussion of upcoming scripture readings, 9:00am in the parlor. II Corinthians 5:6 – 13. Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm
Thursday, August 14:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm
Sunday, August 17:	Choir Practice, 8:10am Sunday Worship – 10:00am Coffee Hour following church in Fellowship Hall. Set4Success (FOS) Shop @ WCC 1-3pm. Set For Success provides to all so that any who struggle to prepare for the start of school need not worry. Rental: Fellowship Hall 1-5pm, Wiscasset Female Charitable Society.

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 , please call Lisa Hargreaves at 207.315.0802.

Volunteer Opportunity at St. Philip's Church

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

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.