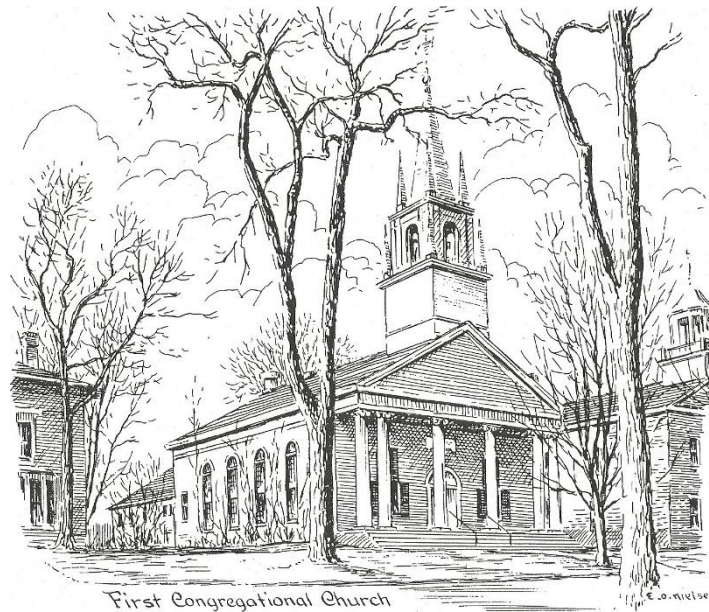


First Congregational Church

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 1, 2026

SECOND 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: "Silence is the sanctuary of the soul." —
Lailah Gifty Akita

PRELUDE

Communion, Op. No.1

Alexandre Guilmant

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS

* CALL TO WORSHIP

{The Message Translation Psalm 63:1-8}

L: God—you're my God! We can't get enough of you! We've worked up such hunger and thirst for God, traveling across dry and weary deserts.

P: So here we are in the place of worship, eyes open, drinking in your strength and glory. In your generous love we are really living at last!

L: Our lips brim with praise like fountains. We bless you every time we take a breath; Our arms wave like banners of praise to you.

P: We eat our fill of prime rib and gravy; we smack my lips. It's time to shout praises! If I'm sleepless at midnight, I spend the hours in grateful reflection.

Because you've always stood up for me, I'm free to run and play.

P: I hold on to you for dear life; and you hold me steady as a post.

* OPENING HYMN

'Be Still My, My Soul'

No. 95

INVOCATION TO PRAYER

We come to you, faithful God, slowing down, taking a deeper breath.

Thank you that we do not need to earn our way into your presence, but that we can come simply, through Jesus, by your Holy Spirit.

We pause. We acknowledge your presence. We trust you to feed us by your Word.

Amen

HYMN

'Verse One 'Sweet Hour of Prayer' NCH No. 505

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: Lebanon

MORNING PRAYER

SILENT MOMENTS FOR PERSONAL PRAYER

* HYMN

'Precious Lord' v.1,2

No. 470

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Luke 4:1-13

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

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

Happy March Birthday to Tom Clement, Sullivan Joyce, Corinne Joyce, Majorie 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 *

Luke 4:1-13

The Temptation of Jesus

4 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, **2** where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. **3** The devil said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.’ **4** Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, “One does not live by bread alone.”’ **5** Then the devil[a] led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. **6** And the devil[b] said to him, ‘To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. **7** If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.’ **8** Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, “Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”’ **9** Then the devil[c] took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, **10** for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you”,**11** and “On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.”’ **12** Jesus answered him, ‘It is said, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”’ **13** When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

This is the Word of God.
Thanks be to God.

New Revised Standard Version Updated Version

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SPECIAL CONGRESSIONAL MEETING –
Sunday March 15 after Worship

Coming Up This Week

Monday, March 2

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

Office Hours 9:30am – 1:30pm

Mah Jongg 3:00 – 5:30pm

Faith Development Meeting 6:30pm

Tuesday, March 3

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

Office Hours 9:30am – 1:30pm

Sheepscot Valley Chorus 7:00 – 9:00pm

Wednesday, March 4

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

Thursday, March 5

Saturday, March 7

PEO Meeting 9-1pm

March Madness Fundraiser at the Rec Center begins

Sunday, March 8

Sunday Worship 10:00am

Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall following Worship

Worship and Music Meeting after Worship

CPR and New Defibrillator (AED) Training at Scout Hall 12:00pm

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

Minister and Teacher: Rev. John Hogue
revjohnwiscassetucc@gmail.com

Pastoral Care – 207 955-0055

Music Director: Joel Pierce

Sexton: Mary McKinney

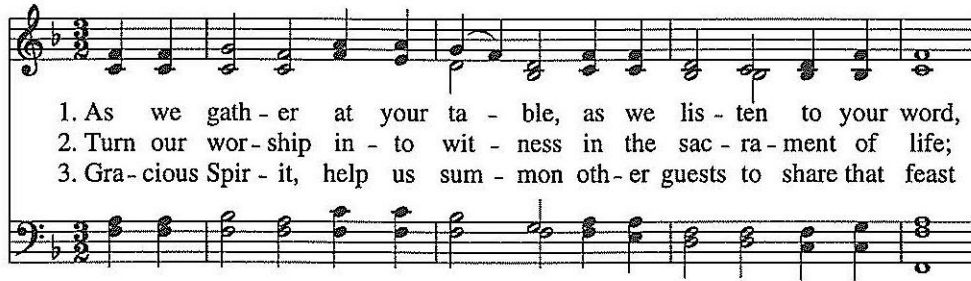
Office Administrator: Hilary Atwood

Church Office Email – fccw@myfairpoint.net

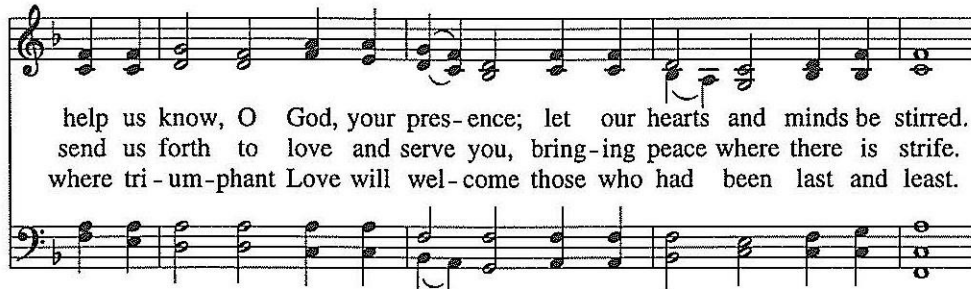
Church Office Phone – 207 882-7544

Church Website – www.uccwiscasset.org

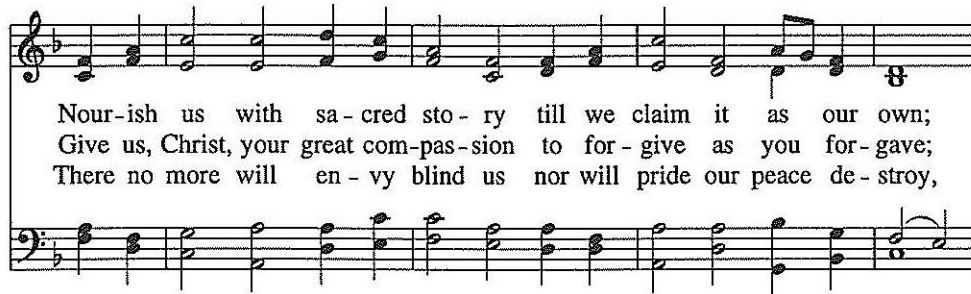




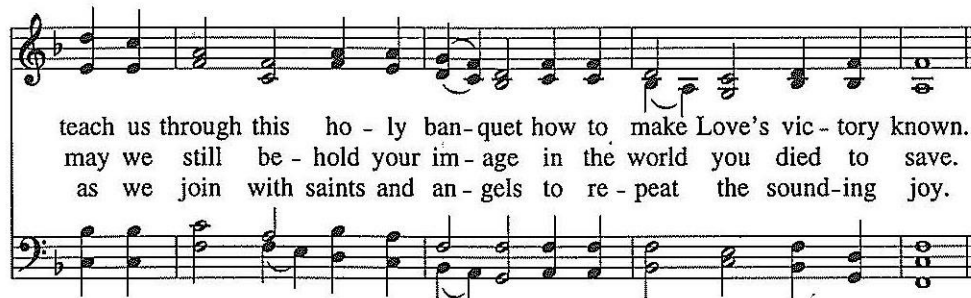
1. As we gath - er at your ta - ble, as we lis - ten to your word,
 2. Turn our wor - ship in - to wit - ness in the sac - ra - ment of life;
 3. Gra - cious Spir - it, help us sum - mon oth - er guests to share that feast



help us know, O God, your pres - ence; let our hearts and minds be stirred.
 send us forth to love and serve you, bring - ing peace where there is strife.
 where tri - um - phant Love will wel - come those who had been last and least.



Nour - ish us with sa - cred sto - ry till we claim it as our own;
 Give us, Christ, your great com - pas - sion to for - give as you for - gave;
 There no more will en - vy blind us nor will pride our peace de - stroy,

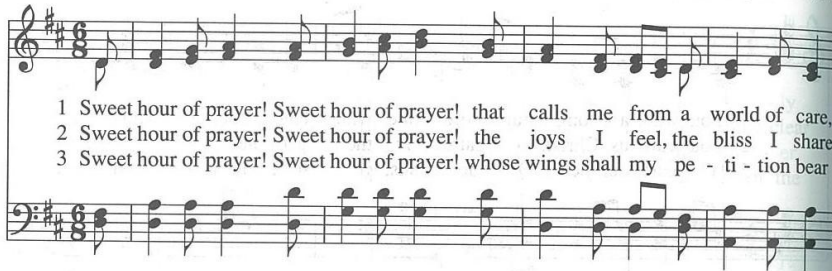


teach us through this ho - ly ban - quet how to make Love's vic - tory known.
 may we still be - hold your im - age in the world you died to save.
 as we join with saints and an - gels to re - peat the sound - ing joy.

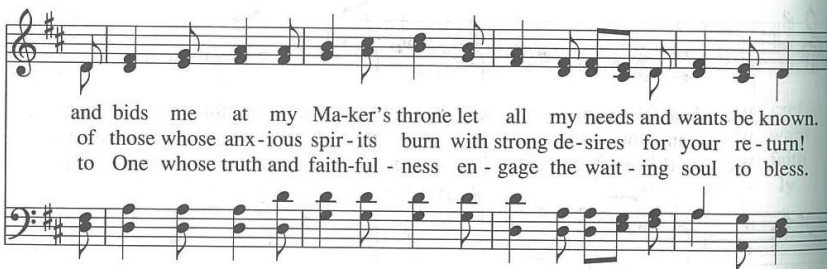
WORDS: Carl P. Daw, Jr., 1989
 MUSIC: *The Sacred Harp*, 1844; harm. FCC, 1997

BEACH SPRING
 87.87D

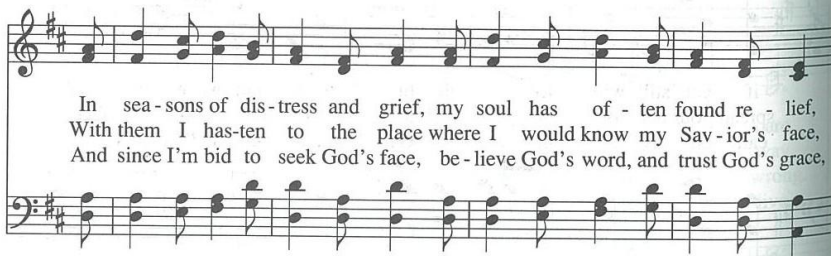
Sweet Hour of Prayer

William Walford, 1845; alt.


1 Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer! that calls me from a world of care,
 2 Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer! the joys I feel, the bliss I share
 3 Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer! whose wings shall my pe - ti - tion bear



and bids me at my Ma-ker's throne let all my needs and wants be known.
 of those whose anx-ious spir-its burn with strong de-sires for your re-turn!
 to One whose truth and faith-ful - ness en - gage the wait - ing soul to bless.



In sea - sons of dis - tress and grief, my soul has of - ten found re - lief,
 With them I has - ten to the place where I would know my Sav - ior's face,
 And since I'm bid to seek God's face, be - lieve God's word, and trust God's grace.

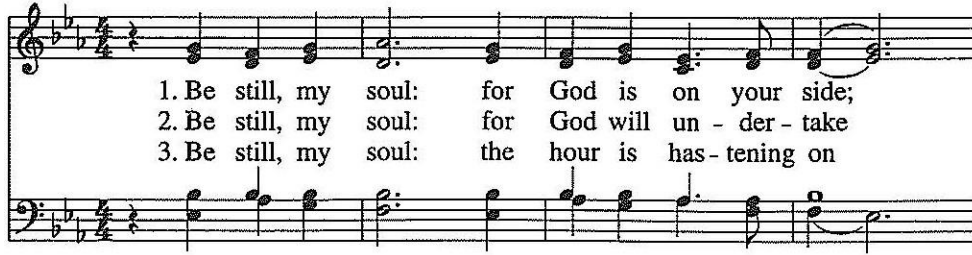


and oft es - caped the tempt - er's snare by your re - turn, sweet hour of prayer!
 And glad - ly take my sta - tion there, and wait for you, sweet hour of prayer!
 I'll cast a - way my ev - ery care, and wait for you, sweet hour of prayer!

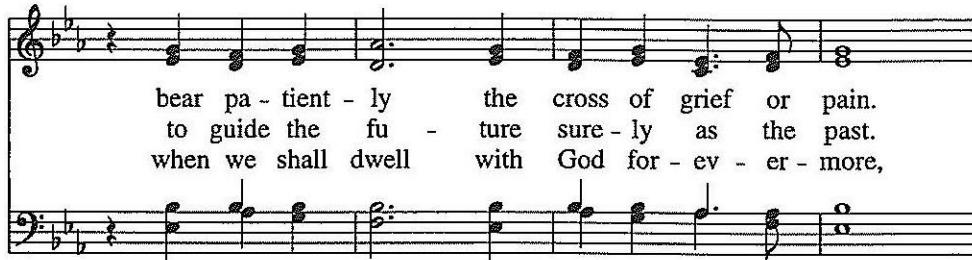
Although credited to a different poet when first published in 1845, researchers believe this hymn was written by William Walford. William Bradbury, a highly trained musician, sang under Lowell Mason in Boston and also wrote "Jesus Loves Me."

Tune: SWEET HOUR L.M.D.
 William B. Bradbury, 1861

Be Still, My Soul



1. Be still, my soul: for God is on your side;
 2. Be still, my soul: for God will un - der - take
 3. Be still, my soul: the hour is has - tening on



bear pa - tient - ly the cross of grief or pain.
 to guide the fu - ture sure - ly as the past.
 when we shall dwell with God for - ev - er - more,



Trust in your God, your sav - ior and your guide,
 Your hope, your con - fi - dence let noth - ing shake;
 when dis - ap - point - ment, grief, and fear are gone,



who through all chang - es faith - ful will re - main.
 all now mys - te - rious shall be bright at last.
 sor - row for - got, love's pur - est joys re - stored.

WORDS: Katharina von Schlegel, 1752; tr. Jane Borthwick, 1855, alt.
 MUSIC: Jean Sibelius, 1899; arr. *The Hymnal*, 1933

FINLANDIA
 10 10.10 10.10 10

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.

WORDS and MUSIC: Thomas A. Dorsey, 1932

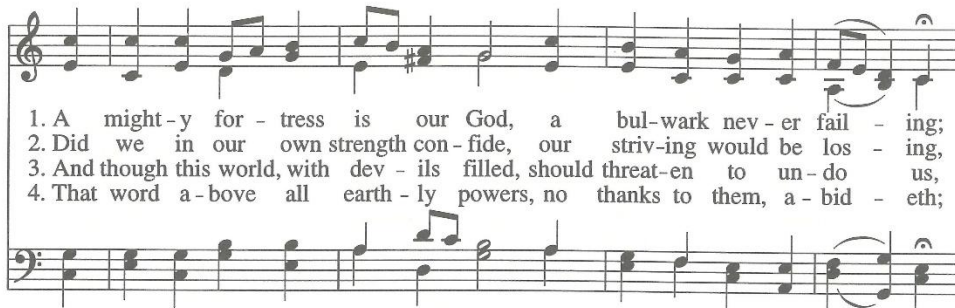
PRECIOUS LORD
66.9D

Dorsey's most widely-known song was written in Chicago in 1932 as he mourned the death of his wife and new-born child.

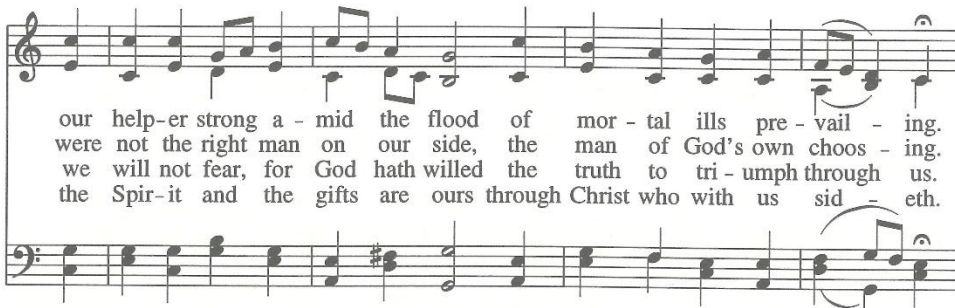
© 1938 Unichappell Music, Inc.

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

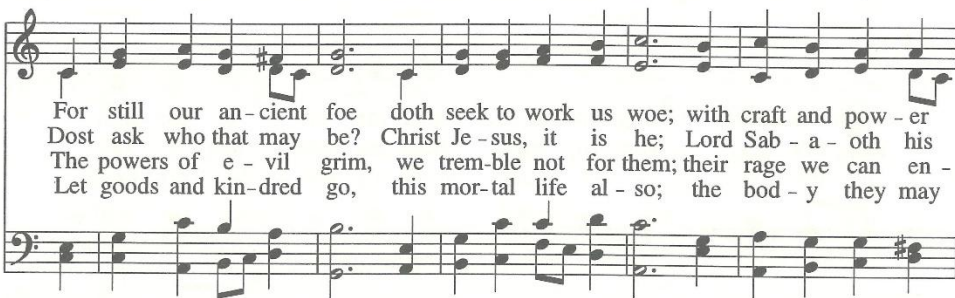
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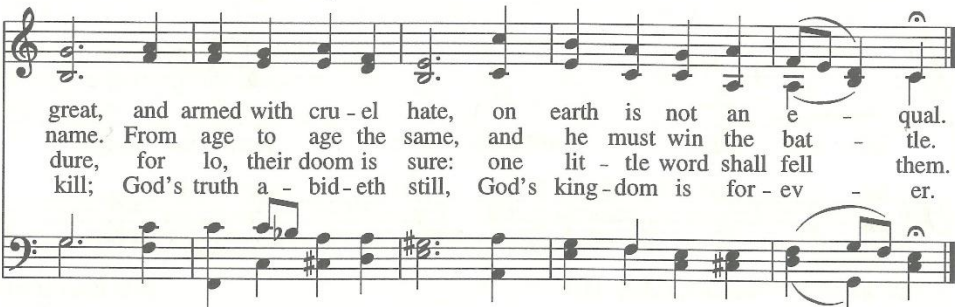
1. A might-y for - tress is our God, a bul-wark nev - er fail - ing;
 2. Did we in our own strength con - fide, our striv-ing would be los - ing,
 3. And though this world, with dev - ils filled, should threat-en to un - do us,
 4. That word a - bove all earth - ly powers, no thanks to them, a - bid - eth;



our help-er strong a - mid the flood of mor - tal ills pre - vail - ing.
 were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choos - ing.
 we will not fear, for God hath willed the truth to tri - umph through us.
 the Spir-it and the gifts are ours through Christ who with us sid - eth.



For still our an - cient foe doth seek to work us woe; with craft and pow - er
 Dost ask who that may be? Christ Je - sus, it is he; Lord Sab - a - oth his
 The powers of e - vil grim, we trem-ble not for them; their rage we can en -
 Let goods and kin-dred go, this mor-tal life al - so; the bod - y they may



great, and armed with cru - el hate, on earth is not an e - qual.
 name. From age to age the same, and he must win the bat - tle.
 dure, for lo, their doom is sure: one lit - tle word shall fell them.
 kill; God's truth a - bid-eth still, God's king - dom is for - ev - er.

WORDS: Martin Luther, c. 1529; tr. Frederick H. Hedge, 1852, alt.; st. 3 alt. Ruth Duck, 1981 EIN' FESTE BURG
 MUSIC: Melody Martin Luther, c. 1529 87.87.66.667

Based on Psalm 46, this hymn by Martin Luther was probably inspired by the 1529 meeting that gave birth to the word 'Protestant.' Luther wrote or edited thirty-seven hymns and many hymn tunes.

St. 3 alt. © 1981,1990 Ruth C. Duck

Let Us Break Bread Together

1. Let us break bread to- geth-er on our knees; (on our knees)
 2. Let us drink wine to- geth-er on our knees;
 3. Let us praise God to- geth-er on our knees;

Let us break bread to- geth-er on our knees; (on our knees)
 Let us drink wine to- geth-er on our knees;
 Let us praise God to- geth-er on our knees;

Refrain

When I fall on my knees, with my face to the ris- ing sun,

O Lord, have mer- cy on me. (on me)

WORDS: African-American spiritual
 MUSIC: African-American spiritual, arr. Carlton R. Young, 1964, adapt.

LET US BREAK BREAD
 10 10 w. refrain

The earliest version of this spiritual consisted of stanza three,
 used to call slaves in Virginia to secret, unlawful meetings.
 The communion stanzas were added after the Civil War.

Arr. © 1965 Abingdon Press, admin. The Copyright Co.

COMMUNION

Nearer, My God, to Thee

488

1. Near - er, my God, to thee, near - er to thee,
 2. Though like the wan - der - er, the sun gone down,
 3. There let the way ap - pear, steps un - to heaven;
 4. Then, with my wak - ing thoughts bright with thy praise,
 5. Or if on joy - ful wing cleav - ing the sky,

e'en though it be a cross that rais - eth me;
 dark - ness be o - ver me, my rest a stone,
 all that thou send - est me in mer - cy given;
 out of my ston - y griefs Beth - el I'll raise;
 sun, moon, and stars for - got, up - ward I fly,

still all my song would be, near - er, my God, to thee,
 yet in my dreams I'd be near - er, my God, to thee,
 an - gels to beck - on me near - er, my God, to thee,
 so by my woes to be near - er, my God, to thee,
 still all my song shall be, near - er, my God, to thee,

near - er, my God, to thee, near - er to thee.

WORDS: Sarah Flower Adams, 1841

MUSIC: Lowell Mason, 1856

Sarah and her sister Eliza, London Unitarians, wrote this and many other hymn texts. American Congregationalist Lowell Mason composed the tune 'while lying awake in the dark,' using it first in his *Sabbath Hymn and Tune Book*.

BETHANY

64.64.66.64

MARCH 1, 2026 ‘Struggles and Encounters’ March 1, 2026

A fellow “from away” once told me he wanted a spiritual retreat — time alone with God, just like Jesus in the wilderness. So a local friend said, “Ayuh... I know just the place,” and sent him to a remote camp up north in February. No Wi-Fi. No cell signal. No traffic noise. Just snow, trees, and the occasional suspicious squirrel. The first day, he said it as beautiful — peaceful, holy even. The second day, he began talking to the wood stove. By the third day, he swore the chickadees were judging him. By the fourth day, he drove 40 miles just to hear someone at a gas station say, “Cold enough for ya?” He later said: “I went looking for God... and mostly found out how noisy my own head is.”

Because we live in a world that values activity and noise more than solitude and silence, we may not understand the life sounds deep inside us which could give direction to our lives if we would invest in the disciplined process of discovering and then listening to these messages. One of the spiritual disciplines I admire is the Quakers. My first boss was a Quaker. I always admired their central theological motif of silence. In fact they remind the rest of Christians and non-Christians alike, that ‘we are noisy creatures.’ In fact in worship, silence is practiced and only if moved by the Holy Spirit, one makes a reference during worship.

Turning back to our text, the first thing we notice about Jesus is that he walked away from the crowds and often spent time alone. In the passage we have read he spends 40 days and nights in this lonely place. Luke also tells of another time when, “... the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their illnesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.” (Luke 5:15-16) We might have different responses to the idea of solitude. Some of us will be very scared of spending time alone - we know that we are extroverts who enjoy people’s company and feed off the affirmation of our friends, families and co-workers. Others of us will think that this sounds like a great idea - finally, a bit of privacy; a bit of peace!

Henri Nouwen wrote a book about the Desert Fathers and Mothers - a group of Christians from the 4th and 5th Century who revived the idea of desert spirituality at a time when the church was becoming increasingly institutionalized. Nouwen warns us against seeing solitude as simply as a quiet place to recharge our batteries, and then go on with life as usual. He writes: 'The main reason Jesus sought solitude was to be with his heavenly Father. How can we, today, choose to cut into our busy schedules and demanding relationships? Is it possible to spend some moments each week with no agenda but to be with God? How can we see time alone as a place of transformation, where we are changed to relate to the world in a new and more godly way?' {Excerpt from his Book The Way of the Heart}

Solitude is the furnace of transformation. Without solitude we remain victims of our society and continue to be entangled in the illusions of the false self. Jesus himself entered into this furnace. There he was tempted with the three compulsions of the world: to be relevant that is-'turn stones into loaves', then - to be spectacular : 'throw yourself down', and finally to be powerful -('I will give you all these kingdoms'). There he affirmed God as the only source of his identity -('You must worship the Lord your God and serve him alone'). Solitude is the place of the great struggle and the great encounter - the struggle against the compulsions of the false self, and the encounter with the loving God who offers himself as the substance of the new self."

The second thing we notice about Jesus is how he rejects unnecessary baggage. "The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, 'I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.'" (Luke 4:5-6) Jesus knows it is so easy to "gain the world" yet "lose your soul" (Luke 9:25), so he rebukes the devil. How many of the advertisements that surround us every day are about "gaining the world", or achieving more "authority and splendor"? How often are we tempted to buy yet more clothes, or upgrade to a better gadget, or invest in a bigger car?

Jesus was a homeless man (Luke 9:58). His only possessions seems to have been one set of clothes (John 19:23). When he sends out the 72 in Luke 10, he tells them: “Do not take a purse or bag or sandals” (10:4). It is not wrong for us to have homes, clothes and other possessions, but Jesus’ example should cause us to question whether we need quite as many things as the marketers tell us we do. One day, a rich dad took his son on a trip. I wanted to show him how poor someone can be. They spent time on the farm of a poor family. On the way home, dad asked, “Did you see how poor they are? What did you learn?”. Son said, “We have one dog, they have four, we have pool, they have rivers, we have lanterns at night, they have stars, we buy foods, they grow theirs, we have walls to protect us, they have friends, we have encyclopedias, they have Holy books.” Then they headed, “Thanks dad for showing me how poor we are.” It’s not about money that make us rich, it’s about simplicity of having God in our lives.

Wilderness worship might ask us to consider whether we rely too much on things - even good things - instead of trusting in God. Maybe walking away from our warm homes and taking a prayer hike through the woods might help you see God afresh. Perhaps putting your smartphone away for a day might give you a new perspective on life and faith. Maybe turning off the music and the radio, sitting silently God’s presence, might be a form of simple, wilderness worship that restores your soul more than you realize.

A lobsterman off the coast near Wiscasset was known for always having his VHF radio blaring. Weather reports, chatter from other boats, Red Sox scores drifting over the static. If it made noise, he had it on. One summer morning, the radio quit. He fiddled with it. Smacked it. Checked the wires. Nothing.

He muttered something unprintable about modern technology and pushed off from the dock in frustrated silence. At first, the quiet bothered him. No voices. No updates. Just the putter of the diesel engine and the slap of waves against the hull. Then something strange happened. He began to hear things he hadn’t noticed in years — the cry of a gull overhead, the creak of rope tightening against a buoy, the rhythm of the tide pulling against the traps. He noticed fog lifting slowly like a curtain rising on a stage. He noticed

his own breathing. Later he told someone at the dock, “I’ve been fishing these waters for thirty years. I didn’t realize how loud I’d let my life get.” He never fixed the radio.

Silence didn’t remove anything essential from his life. It revealed what had always been there. Simplicity works the same way.

We think we need more noise, more news, more opinions, more activity. But most of it is static. When the noise fades, what remains is enough:

- The tide.
- The work in front of us.
- The presence of God.

In Scripture, God rarely shouts. The voice comes in stillness. In the wilderness. In quiet trust. Silence is not emptiness. It is a space where God can be heard. Simplicity isn’t about having less for the sake of less—it’s about removing what distracts us from what matters.

"The Man Who Planted Trees" should be in my opinion mandatory reading for every Christian. Not the biblical kind—though the author Jean Giono created in his slender 4,000-word masterpiece borders on the miraculous—but the kind that begins with dirt under fingernails and the refusal to accept desolation as the final word.

Most readers encounter "The Man Who Planted Trees" as ecological parable or gentle inspiration. They admire its message of environmental stewardship. However in my deeper understanding of the main character Elzéard Bouffier wouldn't let me go.

The story's premise begins In 1913, a young hiker traverses the barren, wind-scoured highlands of Provence, a landscape so bleak it drives inhabitants to madness or exodus. There he encounters a silent shepherd methodically planting oak trees—one hundred perfect acorns daily, year after year, asking nothing in return. The narrator returns after both world wars to discover this solitary man's quiet, relentless labor has miraculously transformed thousands of acres of wasteland into a vibrant, water-rich forest ecosystem where communities once again thrive.

What makes "The Man Who Planted Trees" challenges our understanding of time, purpose, and what constitutes a meaningful life. Bouffier plants trees he will never sit beneath. He creates forests without recognition or reward. He persists through two world wars, through personal tragedy, through complete societal collapse and reconstruction, doing exactly one thing: planting perfectly selected seeds in precisely the right places, then letting nature and time do what they will. This radical patience—this refusal of instant gratification, external validation, or even measurable short-term progress—represents a direct assault on everything our culture holds sacred. Bouffier's calm, methodical labor exposes the poverty of our addictions to immediacy, recognition, and tangible results. And yet, the miracle happens. The wasteland transforms. Life returns. Not through dramatic intervention or technological salvation, but through one man's stubborn, daily choice to believe in a future he personally will barely glimpse. What if we humans look within our own silence and examine our own wasteland with different eyes. What kind of seeds can be planted? One acorn at a time.

The true power of Giono's story isn't its gentle hopefulness but its ruthless rejection of excuses. Bouffier begins his work as an old man, already sixty-five when the narrator first meets him. He has suffered devastating personal loss. The landscape itself actively resists regeneration. The broader society remains oblivious to his efforts for decades. None of this matters to him. None of it interrupts the steady rhythm of his planting.

What "The Man Who Planted Trees" offers isn't gentle inspiration but a radical alternative to despair. Giono doesn't just tell a pretty story about environmentalism—he demonstrates that meaning exists precisely in the face of apparent futility, that purpose transcends outcome, that transformative power often lies in the humblest, most repetitive actions. The story's most devastating passage describes Bouffier's work during World War I: "The war of 1914 had taken away all his sons, all three of them... He resumed his planting." This breathtaking understatement contains volumes—both the immensity of Bouffier's personal tragedy and the immensity of his refusal to surrender to it.

I remember sharing this book with a young man. "The man in this story," I explained, "plants trees knowing three things for certain: many will fail to grow, he won't live to see most that do succeed, and he has no guarantee the world won't destroy his work through war or greed or simple indifference." "Then why bother?" the young man asked. "Because the planting itself matters," I said. "Because transformation always begins in apparent futility. Because life, ultimately, is measured not in what we harvest but in what we plant." I don't know if he understood. But later that day, I saw him reading the book in a corner, his expression intense with discovery. Another acorn planted. If you value comfort over transformation, avoid "The Man Who Planted Trees." This isn't inspirational literature; it's a literary detonation device disguised as a simple tale. Once you truly absorb Bouffier's example, you lose all excuses for inaction. You forfeit the luxury of despair. You find yourself, against all reason, planting seeds in whatever barren landscape you've been given—with no guarantee except that the planting itself may be the most profound expression of being fully alive. And somewhere in your dreams, a forest is already rising.