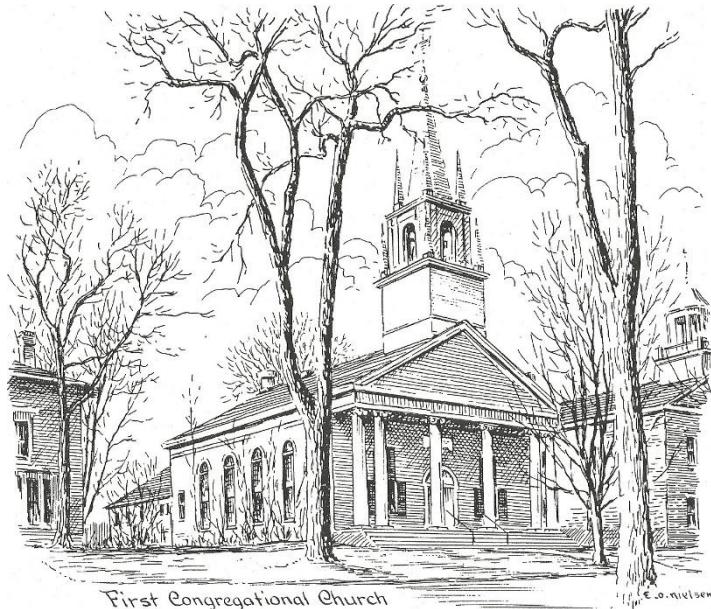


First Congregational Church
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
An Open and Affirming Church



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.

February 1, 2026

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

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: “Blessed are they who see beautiful things in humble places where other people see nothing.” Camille Pissarro

PRELUDE

Adagio

W.A. Mozart

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS

* CALL TO WORSHIP

L: When we seek justice for the other, when we love kindness more than ever,
P: we live as God asks us to live.

L: When we walk humbly through life, when we offer mercy to those who hurt us,
P: we are the blessing God hopes we will be.

L: When we are willing to look foolish by following Jesus, when we choose weakness rather than power,

P: we reflect the One who is in our midst.

* OPENING HYMN

The Church's One Foundation

No. 238

INVOCATION TO PRAYER

Installation of Officers: *UCC Book of Worship*

Rev. John Hogue

L: The Local church commissioning of a lay member is the act whereby a Local Church of the United Church of Christ recognizes the diverse gifts of its members. We celebrate the particular ministry of persons in the life of the congregation and in various settings in the world that God loves. We greet all who are gathered this day in the name of Jesus Christ the head of the church and the one who calls us to the priesthood of all believers.

L: Now there are varieties of gifts,

P: but the same Spirit gives them;

L: and there are varieties of services,

P: but we serve the same One;

L: and there are varieties of activities,

P: but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.

L: To each is given manifestation of the Spirit for the common good:

P: Wisdom, Knowledge, Faith, Healing, Miracles, Prophecy, Discernment

L: All these are activated by one and the same Spirit,

P: who chooses the gifts given to each for the common good.

L: These members have followed God's call, in accordance with the faith and order of this church, to provide leadership among us. They have accepted this responsibility and are before us in witness to their willingness to serve. *{the leaders and their positions will be noted and asked to show their willingness to serve}*

MEMBERS: We do.

L: Are you willing to take on these new responsibilities in service to the Living Christ?

MEMBERS: We are willing.

L: Will you seek to witness in word and example to those around you the good news of Jesus, that there is reconciliation with God, forgiveness of sins, and power for peace and justice among those living the love of God?

MEMBERS: We will, with the help of God.

L: Will you maintain participation and communication with members of First Congregational Church UCC of Wiscasset that all may be strengthened by the service to which you are committed?

MEMBERS: We will, with the help of God.

ALL: We have heard your commitment and we thank God for your generous response to this call to service. Through the beckoning of the Holy Spirit and the commissioning of the church, servants of Christ are both gathered and sent out around the world. We accept your service in *First Congregational Church UCC of Wiscasset* and we pledge our support and prayers that your work may be faithful and effective. In the name of Christ Jesus, we commission you to this service. May God bless you and make you a blessing.

L: Let us pray.

Eternal God, send your Spirit among us, that we may truly be your people. Grant sustenance and wisdom to your servants that they may embrace the opportunities and responsibilities of commissioned ministry in Christ's name and for your glory.

P: Help those commissioned on our behalf to be faithful and honorable, diligent and imaginative.

L: Even in times of difficulty, help them go forth with a real sense of joy and encouragement.

P: For your yoke is easy, and your burden is light.

ALL: Amen.

L: We have heard the promises of our kindred in Christ. We have prayed to uphold and strengthen their resolve for the work before them.

P: We celebrate this household of faith, and lift up the many tasks needed to provide care and growth for all those who worship and study here. May God prosper this church in the mission placed before it, including through the work of our called brothers and sisters.

CIRCLE OF PRAYER AND CONGRATULATIONS

HYMN

This Little Light of Mine, v.1

No. 364

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: Bangladesh

MORNING PRAYER

SILENT MOMENTS FOR PERSONAL PRAYER

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Matthew 5:1-12

Liturgist: This is the Word of God.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

* HYMN

Let There Be Peace on Earth

No. 512

SERMON

"Enjoy the Super Bowl, But be Aware"

OFFERTORY PRAYER

OFFERTORY

Trumpet Voluntary

William Goodwin

* PRESENTATION WITH THE DOXOLOGY

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God for all that love has done;
Creator, Christ, and Spirit One. Amen.**

DEDICATION PRAYER

SACRAMENT OF EUCHARIST

WELCOME

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

L: May the God of foolishness be with you.

P: And also with you.

L: People of God, open your hearts.

P: We offer them to the God who transforms us.

L: Join in singing praises to our God.

P: With joy and wonder, we lift our voices.

CALL TO RECONCILIATION

If we want to truly live in God's presence, we must live as God's faithful people. Let us begin by confessing all the mistakes we have made, the wrongs we have done, the people we have hurt. Join me as we pray together, saying,

UNISON PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS

What have we done to you, dear God? We dishonor you every time we treat another with disrespect. We shatter your heart when we find it easier to break our word, than to take the risk to keep it. We fill your ears with the gossip, lies, and slander we speak about those around us. You are wise enough to forgive our foolishness; you are strong enough to overcome our weakness; you are loving enough to heal the hurt we cause to you and to others. And so you give us new hope and new life in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Silence is kept

ASSURANCE OF GRACE

What has God done to us - shown mercy and forgiven us! This is the good news for us. We will give thanks to God for such grace and hope. Amen.

EUCARISTIC PRAYER

we speak of that mystery we call faith:

Christ died, humbling himself on the cross;

Christ was raised, filled with your righteousness;

Christ will come, so we may inherit your kingdom.

CONTINUED EUCHARISTIC PRAYER AND 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.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

SHARING OF THE BREAD AND JUICE

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

COMMISSIONING

* CLOSING HYMN *Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ* No. 316

BENEDICTION

BENEDICTIONARY 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 *Chaconne in G-minor* Louis Couperin

You are invited to sit for the postlude.

* * * * *

“Our worship ends, let our service begin”

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

Those serving you today:

Ushers: Beth Maxwell and Martha Speed

Reader: Veronica Hogue

Flowers: Jan Shaw

Online Streaming: Dewey Harris

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Communion Sunday: We are now serving all gluten free (gf) elements during communion, and “the cup” contains grape juice.

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 February Birthday to Tom Beane, Laura Downing and Sally Howe

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 *

Matthew 5:1-12

The Beatitudes

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he began to speak and taught them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

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

New Revised Standard Version Updated Version

1. The church's one foun - da - tion is Je - sus Christ, our Lord;
 2. E - lect from ev - ery na - tion, yet one o'er all the earth,
 3. 'Mid toil and trib - u - la - tion, and tu - mult of our war,
 4. Yet we on earth have un - ion with God, the Three - in - one,

we are his new cre - a - tion by wa - ter and the word;
 our char - ter of sal - va - tion, one Lord, one faith, one birth,
 we wait the con - sum - ma - tion of peace for ev - er - more;
 and mys - tic sweet com - mun - ion with those whose rest is won.

from heaven he came and sought us, for us was cru - ci - fied;
 one ho - ly name pro - fess - ing, we share one ho - ly food,
 till with the vi - sion glo - rious, our long - ing eyes are blest,
 O hap - py ones and ho - ly! Lord, give us grace that we

with his own blood he bought us, and for our life he died.
 and to one hope still press - ing, with ev - ery grace en - dued.
 and the great church vic - to - rious shall be the church at rest.
 like them, the meek and low - ly, on high may dwell with thee.

1. This lit-tle light of mine, (of mine) I'm gon-na let it shine; (Oh __)
 (of mine) (Oh __)

This lit-tle light of mine, (of mine) I'm gon-na let it shine; (Oh __)

This lit -tle light of mine, (of mine) I'm gon-na let it shine;
 (of mine)

let it shine, let it shine, let it shine. (oh, let it shine.)

2. This great joy I have, I'm gon-na let it shine . . .
 3. Ev-'ry-where I go I'm gon-na let it shine . . .
 4. All—through the night I'm gon-na let it shine . . .
 5. repeat st. 1

st. 1-4

Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me;

let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.

*With God our cre-a-tor, chil-dren all are we.

Let us walk with each oth-er in per-fect har-mo-ny.

Let peace be-gin with me; let this be the mo-ment now.

With ev-ery step I take, let this be my sol-enn vow:

to take each mo-ment and live each mo-ment in peace e-ter-nal-ly.

Let there be peace on earth and let it be-gin with me.

Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ 316

Unison



1. Let us tal - ents and tongues em-ploy, reach-ing out with a shout of joy:
 2. Christ is a - ble to make us one, at the ta - ble he sets the tone,
 3. Je - sus calls us in, sends us out bear-ing fruit in a world of doubt,



bread is bro-ken, the wine is poured, Christ is spo-ken and seen and heard.
 teach-ing peo-ple to live to bless, love in word and in deed ex-press.
 gives us love to tell, bread to share: God (Im-man - u - el) ev - ery-where!



*Refrain (first time *p*, second time *f*)*



Je-sus lives a-gain, earth can breathe a-gain, pass the Word a-round: loaves a-bound!



WORDS: Fred Kaan, 1975

MUSIC: Jamaican folk melody, adapt. Doreen Potter, 1975

Jamaican folk rhythms meet the spirit of ecumenist Fred Kaan in this 'communion calypso' hymn, first sung at the World Council of Churches Assembly in Nairobi, 1975.

LINSTEAD
LM w. refrain

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2. 1. 2026

Matthew 5:1-12

‘Enjoy the Super Bowl, But be Aware.’

No one sets out to admire weakness. We as Americans admire confidence. Success. The people who seem to have it together. We admire the ones who win—who speak clearly, act decisively, and don’t apologize too much. But picture this scene.

A small crowd gathers on a hillside—not the powerful, not the impressive, but the tired. Fishermen with sore hands. Mothers with restless children. People who have lost more than they can explain. People who are not sure where else to go. They’re not climbing the hill because life is going well. They’re climbing because it isn’t. And then Jesus sits down. Not to give advice on how to get ahead. Not to tell them how to fix themselves. But to say—of all things—that they are already blessed.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are the ones who mourn. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are the hungry. If you were there that day, you might have looked around and wondered, Who exactly is he talking about? Then, slowly, uncomfortably, you might have realized: He’s talking about us.

If the outcome of the Super Bowl comes down to the game’s final play, I will argue people will pray ‘Jesus help us win.’ The values of Jesus clash with the Super Bowl values. When we read the opening sentences of his Sermon on the Mount, it seems his values are light years away from the confident and muscular ethos that football teams rely on for success. He directs attention in this passage toward the weak, powerless, and vulnerable elements of humanity.

Let us recap some of the groups he embraces:

- The poor in spirit: referring either to humble people or to those who are broken and have lost hope.
- Those who mourn, those who suffer loss and the feeling of emptiness that follows.
- The meek: those who are gentle and unobtrusive, who refuse to use power over others as a tool to make things happen.
- The merciful: people who willingly surrender their privileges or otherwise go out of their way to improve others’ well-being.
- Those who are persecuted: people whose refusal to give up their quest for truth or virtuousness results in the taking away of their rights, wholeness, or dignity.

The kinds of people Jesus highlights tend to dwell beneath society's radar. They often stay out, or are kept out of public view. They possess little power. Most of us can find no good reason for aspiring to join these groups. Several different ways of understanding this part of the Sermon on the Mount have been proposed. Some have taken Jesus' declarations as ethical instructions, as if he tells people to shape up and live humbly and mercifully if they want to receive God's gifts. Others see Jesus trying to expose where true contentment resides, not in self-preservation and striving for more, but ironically in a humble embrace of simplicity, suffering, and disadvantage.

I side, however, with a third perspective. Jesus, here at the outset of his public life, identifies the kinds of people he intends to "bless." Who will be made content and gratified by participating in what Jesus offers now and in the future? The kinds of people who suffer brokenness and grief. The people taken advantage of by friends and strangers. The people who always come out on the losing side, whether the field of play involves their economic well-being, their social respectability, or their physical health. Jesus announces he intends to invert our taken-for-granted expectations about where happiness and achievement can be found.

In drawing a contrast between football and those whom Jesus targets for his benefits, I don't mean to read too much into the spirit or principles of the game. Nor is my point to single out the all-American sport as a unique offender. Football merely offers an expression of society's collective values: domination and violence, but also teamwork and incredible athletics prowess. Not all of these lead us in the wrong directions. Yet, the game's focus on sheer force and control — advantages that mourners, the meek, and truly impoverished souls can hardly imagine enjoying — highlights Jesus' efforts to reorder our values through his commitment to fill up the very people we assumed were destined for emptiness.

Especially this week, football also provides a token of our society's obsession with power as a close partner of runaway wealth. Organized football is an expensive game, just ask any rec league organizers or high school principals. Maybe the high costs and sense of extravagance are a reason why football looms large in American identity and civil religion. We've got resources, and we aren't afraid to use them. Need helmets? America can afford lots of those. Lose a linebacker to a knee injury? We've got plenty of huge, fast, strong guys to take his place. Want a memorable pregame ceremony? We can do something cool with a bunch of those

stealth fighter planes we aren't using today. To top everything, sports organizers started infringing games on Sunday, refusing to honor the sabbath. If you want to see real wealth on Sunday, look elsewhere in the stadium. The commissioner of the NFL has "earned" a salary of **\$64 million in one year and not counting bonuses**, Roger Goodall is working on behalf of the rich owners of the league's 32 teams. Full-service luxury suites for the big game are renting in the neighborhood of **\$500,000-700,000**, and some could go for much more in secondary markets. God knows what a beer in a souvenir cup will cost you but last year cost **\$17** and premium beer cost **\$19**. A ticket to the Super Bowl is **\$7750** !! All this will be taking place less the realm of San Francisco, where, according to recent figures, over a quarter of the population **lives below the poverty line**. How many San Francisco residents would be able to watch the game in person?

Talking about values can be slippery. Certainly we don't all value the same things in the same ways. Our individually held values are composed of unique mixtures of our commitments, virtues, and vices. However, Americans live in an environment that too often trains us to look in the wrong places for definitions of success and evidence of the good life. When that happens, we risk misunderstanding where God's true priorities and vision lie. I have taken the liberty of rearranging the Beatitudes into a modern day language so here goes: You're blessed when you hit rock bottom. Because then you can rely on God to go to work for you.

You're blessed when you mourn. That means you feel compassion and empathy for others. You begin to understand that we are all one.

You're blessed when you are humble and authentic. That is worth way more than fleeting power and material possessions.

You're blessed when you hunger and thirst after spiritual things instead of worldly things. Your soul will be full instead of empty.

You're blessed when you express kindness. You will receive kindness in return. You're blessed when you allow God's presence and goodness to fill your mind, heart and soul. Then you will see God in the outside world.

You are blessed if you live in peace and create peace. Then you will understand what it means to be a child of God. You are fulfilling God's dream for world peace. You're blessed when people make fun of you or ridicule you for Jesus' sake. That means you struck a nerve. Well done! Many of Jesus' followers have experienced this. You are in good company.

You're blessed if you are persecuted because of your relationship with God. God knows and sees everything. God will reward you for your faithfulness. You are the salt of the earth. Salt is useful! It preserves and adds flavor. If you lose your saltiness, your flavor, your passion, your God qualities, you will no longer be useful and effective.

I was talking with some of my colleagues about this text and we have given each other permission to share our thoughts about what Mainers would say on the Beatitudes. In Maine, we don't talk much about being "blessed." We say things like, "Could be worse," or "We're managing." Which, honestly, might be the most Beatitude-friendly language there is. Because the poor in spirit around here look like folks who've worked the same job for thirty years and still worry about heating oil.

Mourning looks like empty pews where someone used to sit, and boats that never went back in the water. Meekness looks like showing up, doing your part, and not needing credit for it. Jesus says blessed are the gentle—and Mainers nod, because we know the strongest people are the ones who don't have to prove it. The ones who help you dig out without posting on social media about it.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice.

Around here, that looks like arguing town meeting issues until midnight because it actually matters. It looks like caring what happens to your neighbor's kid—even if you don't agree on much else. Blessed are the merciful. That's the person who remembers you messed up once, but still waves when you pass them on Route 1. That's the grace of letting people be human in a small town where everyone already knows your business. Blessed are the peacemakers—not the ones who avoid conflict, but the ones who stay at the table when it would be easier to storm out or shut down. Jesus isn't blessing weakness. Jesus is blessing a kind of strength that lasts through long winters, hard losses, and the quiet courage of not giving up on each other. The Beatitudes don't promise an easy life. They promise that the life you're already living—the honest, tired, faithful one—is seen by God. And around here, that might be the best news we've heard all week.

This illustration reveals the beatitudes in a nutshell. A frail old man went to live with his son, daughter-in-law, and four-year-old grandson. The old man's hands trembled, his eyesight was blurred, and his step faltered. The family ate together at the table. But the elderly grandfather's shaky hands and failing sight made eating an adventure.

Food fell off his spoon onto the floor. When he grasped the glass, milk spilled onto the tablecloth.

It didn't take long for the son and daughter-in-law to become irritated with the mess. "We must do something," the son decided. "I've had enough of his spilled milk, noisy eating, and food on the floor." So, the husband and wife set a small table in the corner. There, Grandfather ate alone while the rest of the family enjoyed their dinners together.

Since Grandfather had broken a dish or two, his food was served in a wooden bowl. The only words the couple had for him were sharp admonitions when he dropped a piece of silverware, or spilled his food. The four-year-old watched it all in silence. One evening before supper, the father noticed his son sitting on the floor, playing with a piece of wood. He asked his son sweetly, "What are you making?" Brightly, the boy responded, "Oh Daddy, I am making a bowl for you and Mama to eat your food in, when you get old." The four-year-old smiled and went back to work. The next night, Grandfather joined them at the family table.

Thank you, young man. This little boy shines his light, as a peacemaker.

Each day we are sent forth on a mission to live the Beatitudes. Ours is not a life of avoiding evil, it is a vibrant opportunity to live and breathe the goodness of God. Ours is not a mission to tear down, to destroy. We are sent forth as those Christians who love one another, to build up, to recreate in love this universe that will forever bear the mark of whatever we contribute....

What will be the heritage that we shall pass on to future generations and upon which we shall judge ourselves before the face of God? We have been sent; let us be about our mission because You are the light of the world! Like a city on top of a hill, you can't be hidden. If you light a candle, you don't put it under a basket. No! You put it in a candle holder to light the house. By shining your light, you are shining the light of God into the lives of others. Shine brightly!

Now, go! Be blessed and be a blessing! Let your light shine!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please note the change in regular Office Administrator hours beginning Monday, January 12.

Saturday, February 7, 5:30pm, Sweetheart Shrimp Scampi Dinner

Free will donation towards local missions. LIMITED SEATING!!! Reserve your space by texting Rev. John at 207-955-0055. The meal will be cooked by Whitney Inn's Executive Chef Isaac Hogue.

Lenten Study on The Lord's Prayer – if you are interested in joining the study please email Rev. John at revjohnwiscassetucc@gmail.com and let him know what day of the week and time of day would work best for you. One suggestion is to meet on Wednesday evenings and share a simple soup meal, allowing those who work the opportunity to participate.

Coming Up This Week

Monday, February 2

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

Office Hours 9:30am – 1:30pm

Garden Club of Wiscasset Board Meeting 10:00am

Mah Jongg 3:00 – 5:30pm

Tuesday, February 3

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

Office Hours 9:30am – 1:30pm

Sheepscot Valley Chorus 7:00 – 9:00pm

Wednesday, February 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

Saturday, February 7

Sweetheart Shrimp Scampi Dinner to raise funds for mission

Sunday, February 8

Sunday Worship 10:00am

Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall following Worship

Mission Fundraising Meeting Following Coffee Hour

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

