

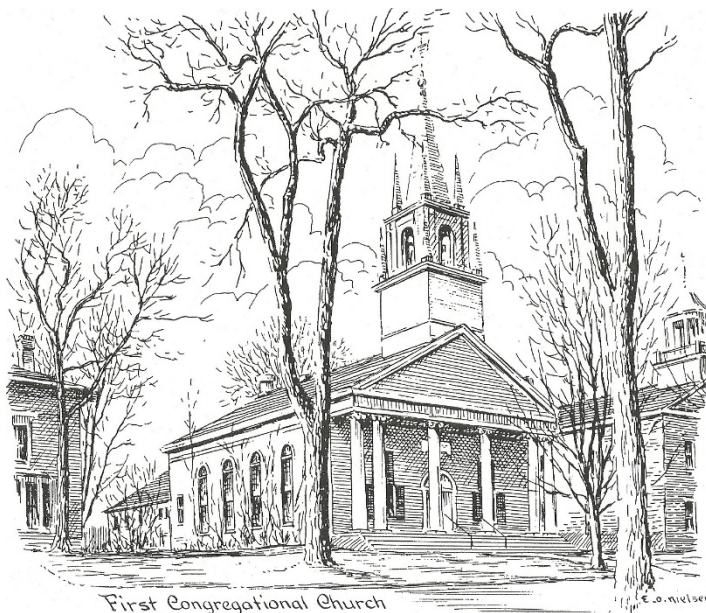
First Congregational Church

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.



April 6, 2025

April 6, 2025
Fifth Sunday in Lent
The Sacrament of Communion
10:00am

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

We joyfully welcome **all** to our worship service today, including those watching on Zoom! Today, after worship, the Organ Society is holding a **Pot-luck brunch** with a **Recipe Auction** to raise money for our Mission partners.

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

For Your Contemplation:

“It was all I could do to watch her die. I wanted someone to walk into her room with a pill or a prayer that would cure her illness or at least halt its progress, but even if that happened – even if Jesus Himself had showed up to call her from her tomb – she would have to die all over again later, as Lazarus did. It would have been a rescue from death instead of a triumph over it, a resuscitation instead of a resurrection.” . . . Barbara Brown Taylor

PRELUDE *Let Us Break Bread Together* arr. John Carter

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHORAL INTROIT *As the Deer* arr. Joel Pierce

* INVITATION TO WORSHIP

Sometimes we say that we are a people of dry bones; we are a people without hope.

God says that we shall be raised from our living graves and we shall be filled with Spirit.

Sometimes we say that we are cut off from one another, and our sources of joy are all dried up.

God says that we shall be at home with one another and we shall live with celebration.

Sometimes we come to worship aimless and fearful.

Then God reveals wondrous works of love and we come to know God.

UNISON PRAYER

Gracious and merciful Redeemer, You are the source of our healing and resurrection. We are lifeless, we are hopeless, we are dried up and cut off from one another like the dead bones of a desert valley. But You cause us to be knit together; You cover us with the flesh of strength; You breathe into us the Spirit of life and hope and prophecy; You raise us out of the graves of our meaninglessness so that we can speak of You Who have also died and are also risen again. Amen.

CHORAL ANTHEM

Guests at His Table

Lee Dengler

JOYS AND CONCERNS:

After each Joy or Concern please respond:

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

MORNING PRAYER

SILENT MOMENTS FOR PERSONAL PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

CHORAL RESPONSE

Amen

SCRIPTURE LESSON

John 4:5 – 42

Liturgist: This is the Word of God.

People: Thanks be to God.

* HYMN OF PREPARATION

Be Still, My Soul

No.95

SERMON:

"Managing God"

Rev. David C. Myers

Text: Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would have not died."
... John 11:21

OFFERTORY PRAYER

OFFERTORY

The Lamb of God

arr. Paris/Larson

* 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.**

The Sacrament of Communion

THE GREETING AND INVITATION

SHARING OF THE SACRAMENT

The First Congregational Church of Wiscasset practices open communion – **all** are invited to come and receive the sacrament that provides forgiveness and grace.

Communion will be served in the pews. Please hold the elements until blessed by the pastor, then commune with everyone.

* HYMN

Now Thank We All Our God

No. 27

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

Praise Ye the Lord

arr. John Carter

You are invited to sit for the postlude.

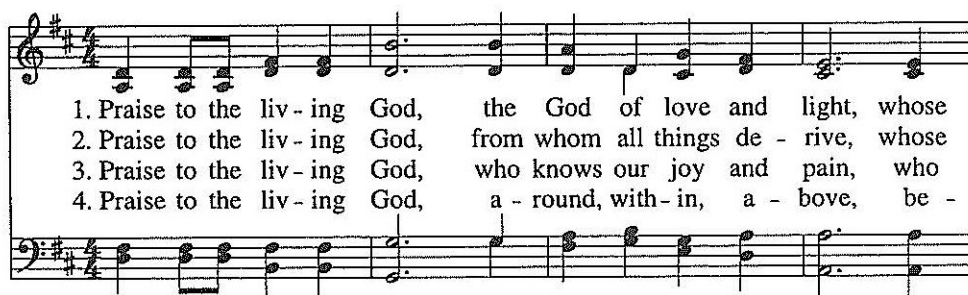
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“Our worship ends, let our service begin”

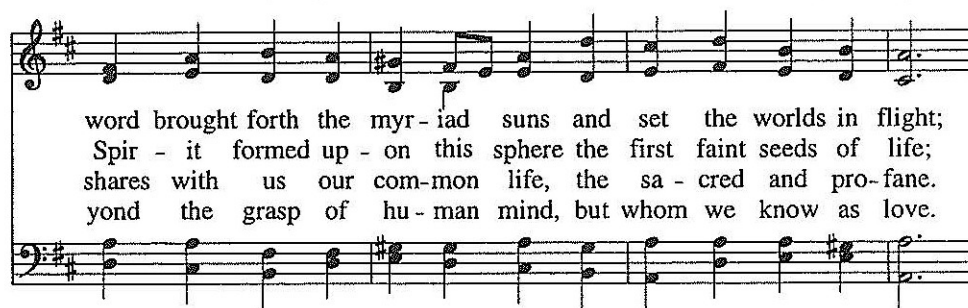
NOTE: Liturgy for today’s worship is taken from *Flames of the Spirit: Resources for Worship*. Edited by Ruth C. Duck, The Pilgrim Press, New York, 1985

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

Praise to the Living God



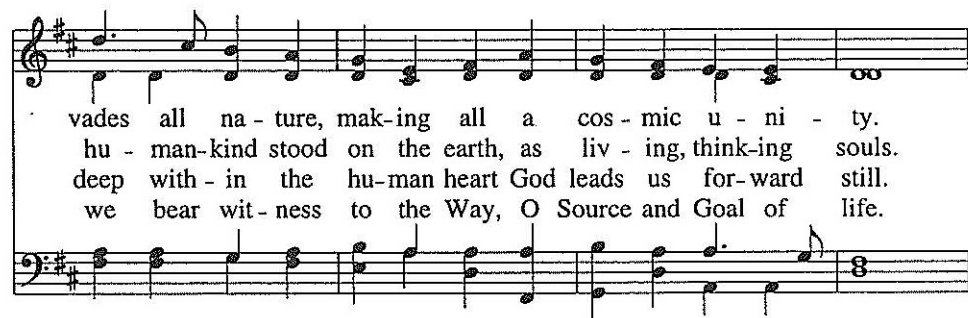
1. Praise to the liv - ing God, the God of love and light, whose
 2. Praise to the liv - ing God, from whom all things de - rive, whose
 3. Praise to the liv - ing God, who knows our joy and pain, who
 4. Praise to the liv - ing God, a - round, with - in, a - bove, be -



word brought forth the myr - iad suns and set the worlds in flight;
 Spir - it formed up - on this sphere the first faint seeds of life;
 shares with us our com - mon life, the sa - cred and pro - fane.
 yond the grasp of hu - man mind, but whom we know as love.



whose in - fi - nite de - sign, which we but dim - ly see, per -
 who caused them to e - volve, un - wit - ting, toward God's goal, till
 God toils wher - e'er we toil, in home and mart and mill; and
 In these tu - mul - tuous days, so full of hope and strife, may



vades all na - ture, mak - ing all a cos - mic u - ni - ty.
 hu - man - kind stood on the earth, as liv - ing, think - ing souls.
 deep with - in the hu - man heart God leads us for - ward still.
 we bear wit - ness to the Way, O Source and Goal of life.

WORDS: Curtis Beach, 1966, alt.
 MUSIC: George J. Elvey, 1868

DIADEMATA
 SMD

So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" They left the city and were on their way to

him. Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, “Rabbi, eat something.” But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” So the disciples said to one another, “Surely no one has brought him something to eat?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, ‘Four months more, then comes the harvest’? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.” Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.” So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.”

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

People: Thanks be to God!

† † †

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

David C. Myers
April 6, 2025
Lent – 5

“Managing God”
John 11:1 – 45

Text: “Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother
would not have died.” . . . John 11:21

It was a Thursday afternoon in February 1988. Our tour bus had left behind the Jordan Valley and Jericho and was “going up” to Jerusalem. “Going up” because Jericho is 1100 feet below sea level and Bethany and Jerusalem are about 2500 feet above sea level – in only 19 miles. About two miles short of Jerusalem we pulled into Bethany to visit the Church of the Resurrection and the purported Lazarus’ tomb.

We visited the tomb first. The tomb has 23 narrow, irregular steps in a tunnel-like spiral stairway one must take going down to a cave to get to the actual tomb. And once we got to the tomb, we were surprised to find that we could go into it. It was damp, clammy and uncomfortable inside and had a slightly unpleasant odor. Tom McKeown, my District Superintendent at the time, went inside the tomb, and after a short passage of time, using the words of Jesus, I said loudly, “Thomas, come out!” And true to Scripture, Tom came emerged from the tomb, and . . . I took a picture.

I think there was more cynicism present at this spot than at most others. First there was the issue of raising people from the dead. Many in our group, despite it being a cherished Biblical story, never believed it literally happened. And then there was the spot itself. Even though it was a very old cave and tomb, I suspect that many didn't really believe that this was the spot where Lazarus was raised from the dead – if they even believed there was an actual place.

And, if you can bear with this most unusual story of Jesus bringing someone back to life – even someone as old and smelly as a District Superintendent – perhaps some of you, being faithful to your Lenten Journey of fasting, repentance and self-denial, might be wondering why we have a resurrection story while we are still in Lent. After all, aren't we supposed to be preparing for the resurrection of Jesus, not jumping the gun and celebrating it early? I mean, couldn't it wait until Easter?!?!?

And if you are that intentional about your Lenten Journey, I commend you! But I would also commend *to* you that there is something very Lenten about this story. Because if our Lenten Journey is so programmed, so rigid that the power of Jesus cannot burst through; then we are not being open to the workings of God's Spirit.

You see Mary and her sister Martha were in a dither. Their brother Lazarus, who was also a friend of Jesus, was very sick. He was dying.

But they also knew they had an “in” with Jesus, the great healer. He was one of their “close friends.” Surely, he would come and heal their brother – one whom Jesus loved. After all, isn’t that what friends are for? So they send for Jesus to come at once. And they are playing their trump card – “Lord, he whom You love is ill.” And Jesus, upon hearing the request, for reasons totally unknown to us, decides to stay in the place where He was. Then two days later Jesus decides to go to Judea, where Bethany is and where Lazarus lived.

But there is another complicating factor – the disciples don’t want Jesus to go there; they are confused and scared. They knew what happened the last time Jesus was there, and it was not so long ago – the religious people tried to stone Him. And the disciples were worried that when Jesus gets there the religious people will try to stone Him again. But Jesus is resolute and says to them, “Our friend Lazarus has *fallen asleep*, but I am going there to awaken him.”

Now, consider this; there were no cell phones back then, not even land line phones; there wasn’t even telegraph, and for that matter there wasn’t even pony express. So, you have to love the way Jesus has of *knowing things* – even though Martha never even sent him a text message telling Him that Lazarus had died.

Of course, the disciples don’t know that Jesus is talking about Lazarus as dead, so they protest even more. And then Jesus “told them

plainly, “Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” And Thomas said to the rest of the disciples, in essence, “OK if Jesus is so bullheaded, we might as well go with Him so that we can die with Him.”

And when they get to Bethany and the tomb, and Lazarus has died, the family has wound him in graveclothes and Lazarus has been inside this tomb for four days. In the words of the King James translation – “he stinketh.”

Martha goes ahead to greet Jesus and she is not happy. “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.”

And oh, how we relate to Martha! How many times have we rehearsed the “if only” lines in our minds? “If only I had practiced the piano more.” “If only I shown more love to my children.” “If only I had studied more in college.” And there is the other side of the “if onlys:” “If only I hadn’t made this choice.” “If only I hadn’t bought that (you fill in the blank).” And we can bring other people into our litany, as did Martha that day, “If only you had been here.” “If only . . .” we all have our own litanies – either for ourselves or for those we would like to blame.

And the tragedy is that some of us never get beyond those lines.

Martha’s line, “If only You had been here,” is one of the ways we try to manage God. We want God on our terms – we don’t want God staying away for two extra days; our needs are more important. We want God at our beck and call. We want to manage God, because after all – don’t we know more

than God does? Don't we know what is best? Our anthem is Frank Sinatra's "I Did It My Way."

Barbara Brown Taylor, one of the great contemporary preachers, tells the story of her friend Matilda who died of Lou Gehrig's disease; which means she gradually lost control of all her muscles. Her face went first, then her vocal cords, then her legs. For the last year of her life, she communicated by writing on an Etch-A-Sketch, one of those erasable things kids play with. Sometimes she would write and erase faster than anyone could read. Matilda found a lot to be excited about.

Barbara Brown Taylor writes, "It was all I could do to watch her die. I wanted someone to walk into her room with a pill or a prayer that would cure her illness or at least halt its progress, but even if that happened – even if Jesus Himself had showed up to call her from her tomb – she would have had to die all over again later, as Lazarus did. It would have been a rescue from death instead of a triumph over it, a resuscitation instead of a resurrection."

Jesus will have none of the "if onlys" and certainly Jesus is not going to let other people's attempts at managing Him deter Him from fulfilling His life. So, Jesus says to Martha, "Your brother will rise again." And Martha retorts, as any good church person would, "Lord, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." And Jesus next response comes to her like the buzzer on *Family Feud* when a wrong answer is given. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in Me, even though they die, yet shall they live, and everyone who believes in Me shall never die." And then, just to make sure, Jesus says to Martha, "Do you believe this?"

Do you notice that Martha said she “knows” that Lazarus will arise at the resurrection on the last day; but Jesus wants more than just “knowing?” Knowing doesn’t often lead to action or change, knowing can be very passive. So, Jesus asked, “do you believe?”

When we believe something, we act on it. When we “know” something, we can tuck it away for future reference.

One theologian, E.D. Maurice, said that this discussion depressed him because, he observed, “how sad it is, that after 2,000 years, the church has gotten most Christians only to the point that the Jews were at Bethany: [that is the] resurrection [happens] in the future; resurrection a week from Tuesday. Only a handful have ever gotten past that point and made the leap of faith that Jesus got Martha to make: the leap to resurrection **now**.”

Edith Wharton put it in a negative way when she said, “People all stopped living at one time or another, however many years they continued to be alive.” It is like the adage that says, “You do not grow old, but when you stop growing, you are old.”

It seems to me that we need to remember that God’s primary purpose is not to get people into heaven, but to get heaven into people.

You see, the biblical term, “eternal life” is not about the length of life, but rather about the quality of life. Periodically we need to be reminded that “eternal” isn’t restricted to “after death”. In fact, it doesn’t even mean “after death”. Rather “eternal” means without beginning and without end – always was, always will be, and always is. In other words, the “eternal” happens now. The resurrection is not just a passport to another world, but it is also a quality of life for this world.

Scripture reveals that God coming in Christ is not simply a particular point in time, it is not simply something that happened 2,000 years ago; but that Christ is something that is happening to each and every one of us. Christ as eternal means that Christ is contemporary to every moment in time. And as some of you know very powerfully, Christ can be a powerful presence in your life now!

And this makes a considerable difference. If Jesus only happened 2,000 years ago, then the events are only limited to history and our memories. If Jesus is only a historical event and oddity, then Jesus makes no difference in our lives. . . . But if Christ is eternal and living in us now – than whatever the tomb we find ourselves buried in, whatever the “if onlys” we rehearse daily, it all can be removed from us, and we can be set free.

And – do you know what?! – the Christ event can give you the resurrection now, and you can come alive again!

And perhaps we can pray, “Lord, I believe, but help me with my unbelief.”

1. Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voic - es,
 2. O may this boun-teous God through all our life be near us,
 3. All praise and thanks to God al - might - y now be giv - en;

who won-drous things hath done, in whom this world re - joic - es,
 with ev - er joy - ful hearts and bless - ed peace to cheer us,
 to God, the three - in - one, who reigns in high - est heav - en,

who, from our moth - ers' arms, hath blessed us on our way
 and keep us in all grace, and guide us when per - plexed,
 the one e - ter - nal God, whom earth and heaven a - dore,

with count-less gifts of love, and still is ours to - day.
 and free us from all ills in this world and the next.
 for thus it was, is now, and shall be ev - er - more.

Those serving you today:
Interim Minister: Rev. David Myers
Music Director/Organist: Joel Pierce
Ushers: Judith Sutter
Reader: Becky Lenz
Flowers: Ron Sanchez

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Lenten Potluck and Bible Study on people of the Bible.

Sunday Evenings, 5:30 – 7:00pm.

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

April 6: Mary Magdelene.

Suggested Readings: Luke 8:1 - 3; Matthew 27:55- 61; Matthew 28:1 - 10.

April 13: Paul (Saul).

Suggested Readings: Acts 9:1 - 30; Acts 17 – 18:1: Acts 25

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

Organ Society Recipe Auction and Pot-Luck Luncheon, Today after church

Chair Yoga with Samantha Main, Wednesday, April 9, 12:00pm.

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

In the Near Future:

April 13: **PALM SUNDAY** -- Luke’s Passion Account (Luke 22:14 – 23:56)
11:20am Meeting of those interested in joining the church.
5:30pm Lenten Bible Study and Potluck Supper. (Last Session)

April 17: 7:00pm **Maundy Thursday**/Tenebrae Service, at FCCW.

April 18: *6:00pm **Good Friday** observance at St. Philip’s Episcopal Church.

April 20: **EASTER SUNDAY**

6:00am Sunrise Service at the Town Wharf.

10:00am Easter Service of the Resurrection.

April 27: 10:00am Worship with Baptism and Reception of New Members.

NEW MEMBERS: On Sunday April 27 we will be conducting the Sacrament of Baptism and receiving new members. If you are interested, please contact Rev. Myers, and be at a meeting of all interested on Sunday, April 13, immediately after the Coffee Hour.

READER'S NEEDED:

- 1.) For the Reading of Luke Passion account on **Palm Sunday; 8 – 10 readers.**
- 2.) and for the **Maundy Thursday** Service of the Last Supper and Tenebrae: **12 readers,** (will include some from St. Philip's Episcopal Church).

Coming Up:

Sunday, April 6:	Choir Practice, 8:10am Sunday Worship – 10:00am Organ Society Recipe Auction & potluck Luncheon. No Youth Group Lenten Bible Study and Potluck Supper in Fellowship Hall, 5:30pm.
Monday, April 7:	Mah Jongg, 6:00 – 8:30pm Faith Development meeting, 6:30pm
Tuesday, April 8:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm Sheepscot Valley Chorus, 7:00pm
Wednesday, April 9:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm Organ Society Meeting, 9:30am Feed Our Scholars(FOS), 11:00am Chair Yoga with Samantha, 12:00pm(noon)
Thursday, April 10:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm
Sunday, April 13:	Choir Practice, 8:10am Palm Sunday Worship – 10:00am Meeting for New Member after Church, 11:20am Youth Group, 11:45am

Lenten Bible Study and Potluck Supper in Fellowship Hall, 5:30pm.

Sunday, April 20:

EASTER SUNDAY

Sunrise Service at the Town Wharf, 6:00am

Easter Service of the Resurrection, 10:00am

Sunday, April 27:

Worship with Baptism and Reception of New Members

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.

Need a ride or Can you provide a ride?

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

Volunteer Opportunity at St. Philip's Church

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



It is once again time to order Easter Flowers to decorate our sanctuary for the celebration of Christ's Resurrection. Easter is on April 20, so **orders for 6" lilies, 6" tulips, 7" large bloom daffodils or 4" Hyacinths must be into the church office by Thursday April 17.**

Prices are listed below. Please return this form with payment (checks to First Congregational Church with the notation "Easter Flowers").

Your Name: _____

_____ Lily 6" - \$11.00 In honor/memory of, (circle one).

_____ Tulip 6" - \$9.00 In honor/memory of, (circle one).

_____ Daffodils 7" large Bloom - \$11.00 In honor/memory of, (circle one).

_____ Hyacinths 4" Blue, Pink, White - \$5.00 In honor/memory of, (circle one).

Total \$ _____

Flowers can be taken home after Easter. Remaining flowers will be delivered to members of the community who must work on Easter (police officers, firemen/women, nurses, caregivers, etc.) as an expression of our gratitude for their service.