

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.



July 6, 2025

July 6, 2025
Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
10:00am

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

We joyfully welcome **all** visitors to our worship service whether present or on Zoom!
The First Congregational Church of Wiscasset is an Open and Affirming Church
affiliated with the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ.
You are invited to coffee, refreshments and conversation Fellowship Hall
immediately after worship.

For Your Contemplation:

“The central figure in this parable is not the Samaritan. He is simply one of the three characters in the story who have the opportunity to display neighborliness as Jesus defines it. The defining character – the one whom the other three respond by being neighbor or non-neighbor – is the man who fell among the thieves.”

. . . Robert Farrar Capon

PRELUDE

Prelude in B-minor
Prelude in B-minor

Frederic Chopin

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHORAL INTROIT

In the Lord I'll be Ever Thankful

* INVITATION TO WORSHIP

Come, let us worship Almighty God.

Let us lift up our songs, our prayers, our praises.

Come, let us honor Christ Jesus.

Let us love Christ with our hearts, our minds, our spirits.

Come, let us be filled with the Spirit of the Living God.

Beathe in us, Breath of God.

* HYMN

In Christ There Is No East or West

No.381

LITANY OF CONFESSION

Gracious and Compassionate God, we make our confession before You not to add to Your knowledge, but that we may understand the truth about ourselves, and open ourselves up to Your blessing of Grace and the teachings of Your Word.

Christ Jesus, we have lived as if we did not need You, pretending that life is what we make it. In those exceptional moments of openness when we received the gift of faith, we have assumed it was given for ourselves alone. Awaken us by Your Spirit to fuller dimensions of faith. Lead us to find in our neighbors the opportunities for love, in the social order the possibilities for justice, and in the affairs of nations the potential for peace. Reform our attitudes and behavior until in every circumstance we may, by Your grace, be instruments of Your saving Word.

Hear the Good News: Jesus died for us while we were yet sinners; that proves God's love for us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven! Amen.

ANTHEM

The Battle Hymn of the Republic

arr. Peter Wilhousky

JOYS AND CONCERNS:

After each Joy or Concern please respond:

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

MORNING PRAYER

SILENT 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

Kyrie Eleison (Lord, Have Mercy)

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Luke 10:25 – 37

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

People: Thanks be to God.

* HYMN

O God of Every Nation

No.517

SERMON:

"Seeing God in the Face of the Enemy"

Rev. Myers

Text: "Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers."

... from Luke 10:36

OFFERTORY PRAYER

OFFERTORY

Mazurka in A-minor

Frederic Chopin

* 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 Holy Communion

We practice Open Communion. All are invited to receive the means of grace the bread and wine provide. Our church swerves gluten free bread, and grape juice. Please wait until all are served, then we will consume together.

Invitation to the Table of Grace: As we gather at this table remembering Jesus last meal with His disciples, we come knowing the Christ welcomed all. Come. Join the body of Christ that forgives and has compassion to all.

For we are the Body of Christ, and around this table we enact our faith. The Body broken that we share restores us to wholeness; and lifeblood is poured out to bring healing to our world. God has told us that the heavenly realm is at hand. Even though we get too wrapped up in our busyness, we experience bits and pieces of it when we extend love and care to those in need, whether we know them or not. And God now invites us to gather as One Body, in One world, loved and redeemed by God.

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

Rev. Myers

Holy God, in the fullness of time, you sent your son Jesus Christ, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, all that we may be reconciled to you O God, the source of life and love.

Jesus healed the sick, ate and drank with outcasts and sinners, Jesus opened the eyes of the blind and proclaimed the Good News of your Kin-dom to the poor and these in need. In all things Jesus fulfilled your gracious will.

On the night Jesus freely gave himself to death, our Lord took the BREAD . . . and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, and said, “Take, eat: This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

(Bread is served in the pews)

After supper Jesus took the **cup of wine**, . . . and when he had given thanks, He gave it to them, and said, “Drink from this all of you; this is My blood of the New Covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sin, “Whenever you drink of it, do this in remembrance of Me.”

(Wine is served in the pews)

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (unison): **Our Creator, our Savior, our Sustainer: In this Holy Mystery you have given yourself to us. We are eternally grateful. Empower us, that we may go into the world in the strength of your spirit to give ourselves to each other in the name of Jesus Christ who gave his life for us.**

* HYMN *Jesu, Jesu* No.459

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 *America the Beautiful* arr. Linda Hartmann



You are invited to sit for the postlude.

* * * * *


“Our worship ends, let our service begin”



1. In Christ there is no east or west, in him no south or north;
 2. In Christ shall true hearts ev - ery-where their high com-mu-nion find;
 3. Join hands, dis - ci - ples of the faith, what-e'er your race may be;
 4. In Christ now meet both east and west, in him meet south and north;

but one com-mu - ni - ty of love through-out the whole wide earth.
 his ser - vice is the gold-en cord close - bind - ing hu - man-kind.
 all chil-dren of the liv - ing God are sure - ly kin to me.
 all Christ - ly souls are one in him through-out the whole wide earth.



WORDS: John Oxenham, 1908, alt.

MUSIC: African-American melody, arr. Harry T. Burleigh, 1939

McKEE

CM

Allegretto moderato 87% DECEMBER

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he said, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ He said to him, ‘What is written in the law? What do you read there?’ He answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.’ And he said to him, ‘You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.’

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’ Jesus replied, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.” Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’

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

People: Thanks be to God!

O God of Every Nation

1. O God of ev - ery na - tion, of ev - ery race and land,
 2. From search for wealth and pow - er and scorn of truth and right,
 3. Keep bright in us the vi - sion of days when war shall cease,

re - deem your whole cre - a - tion with your al - mighty hand;
 from trust in bombs that show - er de - struc - tion through the night,
 when ha - tred and di - vi - sion give way to love and peace,

where hate and fear di - vide us, and bit - ter threats are hurled,
 from pride of race and sta - tion and blind - ness to your way,
 till dawns the morn - ing glo - rious when truth and jus - tice reign,

in love and mer - cy guide us, and heal our strife - torn world.
 de - liv - er ev - ery na - tion, e - ter - nal God, we pray.
 and Christ shall rule vic - to - rious o'er all the world's do - main.

WORDS: William W. Reid, Jr., 1958

MUSIC: Traditional Welsh melody; harm. David Evans, *Revised Church Hymnary*, 1927LLANGLOFFAN
76.76D

Refrain (Unison)

Je - su, Je - su, fill us with your love, show

Fine

us how to serve the neigh-bors we have from you.

1. Kneels at the feet of his friends, si - lent - ly wash - es their
 2. Neigh-bors are wealth-y and poor, var - ied in col - or and
 3. These are the ones we would love, these are the ones we would
 4. Lov - ing puts us on our knees, thank-ful and hum-ble and

D.C.

feet, Je - sus, our broth-er, a hum - ble man.
 race; neigh-bors are near and far a - way.
 serve; all these are neigh-bors, your child - ren, too.
 true; this is the way we would live with you.

WORDS: Tom Colvin, 1969, alt.

MUSIC: Ghanaian folk song; arr. Tom Colvin, 1969; harm. Charles H. Webb, 1988

This text was written for a meeting of evangelists at Chereponi, Ghana, and translated by Church of Scotland missionary Tom Colvin. The Ghanaian folk tune was collected in the Chereponi area.

CHEREPONI

Irr. w. refrain

Words, music © 1969,
 harm. © 1989 Hope Publishing Co.

“Seeing God in the Face of the Enemy”

Luke 10:25 – 37

Text: “Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the thieves?” . . . Luke 10:36

I begin with a confessional story – one that may be similar to your own experiences . . . or not. I was a senior in high school, and it was spring. Now keep in mind that spring comes late in Maine. I had just spent a glorious 4 hours at the senior prom with Roberta Beadnell. After the prom we got in my parents’ car and started driving. I knew that Roberta was just learning how to drive, so we went on a quite deserted road in rural Maine. I asked her if she wanted to drive. She responded that she didn’t have her license, and I, quick of thought and pure of motive said, “slide over next to me and you can steer and I will operate the pedals.”

She did and so we engaged to be what an observer would call “a two-headed driver” – and we really were. We did quite well for a few miles, then, golly, gosh, gee whiz I don’t know really what happened – it could have been Roberta’s lack of steering experience, or perhaps the hormones that were kicking in due to our closeness – anyway we found ourselves in the ditch beside the road – on the opposite side of the road at that.

It was about 1 in the morning. We had no cell phones in 1966. We were at least 12 miles from either of our homes, and probably at least 2 miles from the nearest home at all! What to do?

I got out, assessed the situation, went back straightened the steering wheel, told Roberta to put the car in drive, then went back to the stuck rear wheel, took off my prom jacket and put it under the rear tire that was spinning, and tried to move the car forward. Have you ever seen a white prom jacket after it was swept under a spinning tire in the Maine mud season?

It only increased the size of the muddy rut.

I got back in the car trying to plot the next move. We decided simply to wait. After about an hour – it seemed like forever – a car came down the road, driving slowly and weaving a bit. I quickly jumped out of the car and stood in the middle of the road and waved him down. I don't think he saw me at first, but then came to a screeching stop as I jumped out of the way. When he got out of the car, I knew he was trashed. He reeked of alcohol, and was brandishing a gun.

I was petrified, not only for my own life, but perhaps even more so for Roberta's. I wished I hadn't flagged him down. I thought staying here until the next morning would have been wiser. What on earth is this gun wielding drunk going to do to me? Quite frankly the thought passed through my mind, I'd rather be dead than be saved by this man.

What do you do when the only chance of being rescued is by someone you have been taught to fear?

Jesus' stories and parables can lead us along a path and suddenly take a turn that we weren't expecting. Many of Jesus' parables have a twist in them that lead us to a meaning far more powerful than what we normally think. I believe that is the case with the parable of the so-called Good Samaritan.

When we study the Bible it is important to pay attention to context. And the context is found in the four verses (25 – 28) that precede the parable proper. There we find a lawyer standing up to test Jesus. He asks what he must **“do”** to inherit eternal life. The question itself is interesting, because aside from being born, what else can you **do** to inherit anything in a culture that is so based on family? At any rate Jesus asks the lawyer to recite the law, religious law. The lawyer does well, saying “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus tells him, “Do this and you shall live.”

But the lawyer, **“wanting to justify himself”** asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” And Jesus begins the parable.

But before we look at the parable, let's remember to whom Jesus is telling it. The hearer is a lawyer, a member of the privileged class. He is well versed in religious law and tradition, and also one who was relatively wealthy. Remembering this is important, because it is his counterpart in the story who is left for dead beside the road.

The parable unfolds. “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho,”. Anyone who has been to Israel/Palestine knows all too well that you

go **down** to Jericho from Jerusalem. The two cities are about 19 miles apart. Jerusalem is about 2,600 feet above sea level and Jericho is about 1100 feet below sea level, about 8 miles from the Dead Sea, the lowest place on earth. You literally go “down” about 3,700 feet traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. There are enormous climatic changes that occur in those 19 miles. I have been to that area in both February and in September, both times there was about a 30 – 45-degree temperature difference. Jericho is almost tropical; indeed, even today it is known for its agriculture and the wonderful citrus fruits grown there today. Even when it snows in Jerusalem, it will be 60 – 70 in Jericho. Jericho is like an oasis in the barren dessert area of the Jordan River Valley near the Dead Sea.

And while Jerusalem was the religious capital of that region, Jericho was one of, if not, the oldest city in the world. It was along a major caravan route from Egypt to the region now known as Iran. People who traveled from Jerusalem to Jericho had either of two purposes – to engage in trade, or, to take a vacation.

But the road to Jericho is a dangerous one. The road borders Samaria, and is hidden in the desert, craggy mountains as it winds its way down to the Jordan River Valley. There would be plenty of opportunity to be stripped, robbed and beaten as the man in the story was. That he was robbed is another indicator of his wealth. We are not told who stripped, robbed and beat him and left him for dead. That is left to our imagination. I think Jesus wanted it that way because our imagination can help define our stereotypes. It could have

been anybody, but with the road skirting the border of Samaria, the imagination of the privileged class and that of the lawyer hearing the story would probably assume that Samaritans had done the dirty deed. We are told the man was left “half-dead.” We can assume the man had only enough consciousness to see figures pass along the road, but not enough strength to speak or move, and certainly thinking, “if I don’t get help soon, I’m going to die.”

As the man lies there half-dead he sees a figure “going down” the road. Since we are told the passer-by is “going down” the road it means he was going from Jerusalem to Jericho. And that figure turned out to be a priest. The beaten man’s heart must have jumped. I can almost hear his thoughts. “A priest, he’s leaving Jerusalem, he must be going to Jericho for a few days of R and R. A colleague of sorts, surely he will save me.”

But the priest doesn’t. As a matter of fact “after he saw him,” he passes by on the other side of the road.

Now this road is not a multi-laned highway. It is more like a cart path – to “pass by on the other side” takes real intentionality as if to go out of his way to avoid the beaten man.

The man left robbed, beaten and half-dead had to be devastated.

We want to help the priest get off the hook. We excuse the priest by saying the laws of cleanliness apply, and for a priest to defile himself with blood would render him unclean for seven days. Well, that would more likely apply if he were going “up the road”, going back to Jerusalem and to the

temple. But likely, he was going away from the temple for a week or so of vacation. He would be able to cleanse himself before he returned.

Sometime later a Levite comes by. A Levite is a temple assistant, a priest's helper. The man beside the road must have felt, "Well maybe the priest knew the Levite was coming after him and since the Levite is a priest's helper, he surely will take care of me."

But the Levite doesn't. He too "passes by on the other side."

The man left for half-dead has to be devastated.

We don't like to get involved. In our society people get sued for doing "Good Samaritan" behavior. We always have some fear; some excuse.

Back to the parable. And this is where, I think, we get our most succinct understanding of what Jesus meant as he crafted this parable.

A Samaritan comes by. Whether or not it had been Samaritans who robbed and beat the man, the Samaritans were hated by the Israelites because they had broken from the true religion of Israel and established some of their own laws and customs – many of which would violate the true Jewish laws. I don't think there is anything in our time that would rival such a concept of the distaste and hatred the Jews had for the Samaritans – and vice versa.

The man beside the road had to be devastated, perhaps filled with even more fear and terror. "What will this Samaritan do to me?" I can almost hear the man beside the road say, "I'd rather be dead than be saved by a Samaritan."

But listen to Jesus as He tells the story: **“and when he (the Samaritan) saw him, he had compassion.”**

To have compassion means to “bear with” or “suffer with”. The enemy, the Samaritan, enters into the suffering of the man who fell among thieves. He touches the half-dead man. He anoints him in oil, hoists him on his animal and takes him to an Inn, “and took care of him.” The next day he gave the Innkeeper the equivalent of two days wages and said to the Innkeeper, “Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.”

This Samaritan, this enemy, is as extravagant with care as God is with love!

Pause

I have some questions. Who do we, as hearers of this story, identify with? While our tendency might be to identify with the Samaritan, that would not have been the case in the first telling. As Jesus told the story to the original hearer, a religious lawyer – that person would identify with the man beaten and left for dead by the road. If that is the case, consider these questions: What does it mean to be brought back to health by someone you fear and for whom you probably have a fair amount of hate? What does it take to allow yourself to be ministered to by someone you have always detested? And, perhaps most importantly, where do we find God in the parable?

God is seen in the totally unexpected, undeserved, extravagant help of the Samaritan. It is the supreme example of God’s grace. And that refers us back

to the introduction to the story. You see, the problem is: is this good news or bad news, particularly if you are a religious lawyer, “trying to justify (yourself)?”

We have grown up being taught to be like the Good Samaritan. Don’t get me wrong, being a “Good Samaritan” is a good thing to do, but I think we have tended to make a new legalism out of this parable – “thou shalt be a Good Samaritan.” While acting like a Good Samaritan is a good idea, I think the real impact of this parable is about where God can show up in our lives. And just what does it mean to have God show up in your life when not only do you not expect it, but actually fear it?

And the man “going down to Jericho”, a man the religious lawyer could identify with, finds God not in the face of priest, not in the face of a Levite, but in the face of an enemy, a man whom he despises – a Samaritan. Furthermore, it seems to me that the person receiving those “Good Samaritan works” is not a poor person; indeed, that person was quite wealthy. Contrast this to a “Samaritan” who, not only the enemy would be seen as the poor. So, in the story what we see happening is the poor ministering to the rich.

But there is Good News for me in this story.

The contemporary Biblical scholar, Walter Wink, said about this parable, “the Good News is that the bad person helps. When we begin to think that good things can come from bad people, then we can begin to pray for our enemies.” We also can begin to fathom that God’s greatness and grace is so far beyond our wildest imagination!

Well, I want to say a word for mission trips to “undeveloped countries.” “Beyond our wildest imagination” is what such programs are all about. We may enter them trying to “do Good Samaritan works” **to** or **for** the people we go to help. But we get transformed from that. If we want, we find that we are in accompaniment with the people we work with or are in Covenant with. We learn *with* them. We share faith *with* them. Notice how the words change from “*to*” and “*for*” to “*with*”?

We may have riches in a monetary sense. Those riches may provide water to the thirsty. Those riches may provide medicine or mosquito netting to cure disease. Those riches may build houses schools, or medical clinics. But those whom we minister – not *to*, not *for*, but *with* – have riches that can transform us. They can satisfy our deepest thirst, cure our spiritual sickness. And together we can walk as servants of Christ to spread Good News to all our brothers and sisters in the North and in the South.

When I was in High School I remember Alice Drew, a retired schoolteacher, who once said to my mother, “I like Rev. Travers Smith’s sermons, he always leaves you with something to think about.”

Well, today I’m going to heed Alice Drew’s words of wisdom and try to leave us with something to think about. Who are your enemies? Who are the Samaritans in your life? How can you find God and God’s gracious, incomprehensible, extravagant love in those persons you despise the most?

The story of the man left beaten beside the road tells us that when we can do this we can really understand God's grace.

Amen.

† † †

Those serving you today:

Interim Minister: Rev. David Myers

Music Director/Organist: Joel Pierce

Service Streamer: Angie Eddy

Ushers: Lisa Hargreaves & Judith Sutter

Reader: Cindy Clement

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.

Summerfest + Meeting, Sunday, July 6 following church. All those interested are welcome to join.

Church Council meeting, Wednesday, July 9, 6:30pm in the Parlor. If attending by Zoom please request a link from Cindy.

Happy Birthday to all church members with July Birthdays.

*Paul Cappers, George Peck, Vivian McKinney,
Nancy Schilke, Conrad Schilke, Roger Whitney, Happy Birthday!*

Sunday, July 6:	Choir Practice, 8:10am Sunday Worship – 10:00am Summerfest + Meeting after church today
Monday, July 7:	Mah Jongg, 6:00 – 8:30pm
Tuesday, July 8:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm
Wednesday, July 9:	Bible Study , A discussion of upcoming scripture readings, 9:00am in the parlor. Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm Church Council meeting , 6:30pm in the Parlor
Thursday, July 10:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm
Sunday, July 13:	Choir Practice, 8:10am Sunday Worship – 10:00am

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.