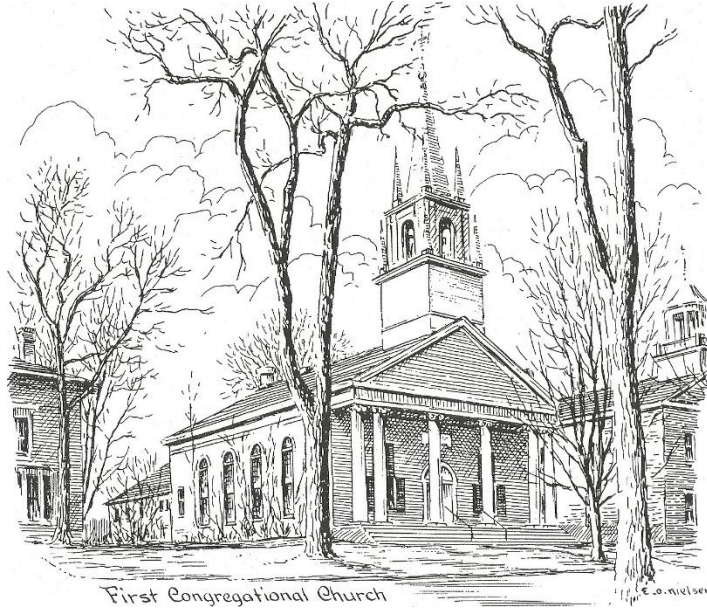


First Congregational Church  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
*An Open and Affirming Church*



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.*

May 3, 2026

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER  
DERBY SUNDAY AND BRING A FRIEND SUNDAY

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 Quotes for the week:

“We are glad you are here for we believe the art of hospitality is our way to reveal God's work of love.” Rev. John Hogue

“As you walk this earthly road, remember: you are a traveler with a purpose. Open your heart to the lessons, let your soul grow through love, and honor this sacred experience for what it is—a brief but powerful chapter in the eternal story of your existence.” Rumi

“You're my beloved, the sun that illuminates my heart and soul. In your presence, I find the light of divine love, and together, we dance in the eternal ecstasy of unity.” Rumi

PRELUDE                      *'The Heavenly Word, Proceeding Forth'*                      Gerald Near

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHOIR INTROIT                      *'Calm Me, Lord'*                      Taize

*Calm me, Lord, as you calmed the storm.*

*Still me, Lord, keep me from harm.*

*Let all the tumult within me cease; enfold me, Lord, in Your peace.*

\* CALL TO WORSHIP

L: We are God's household, crafted by the Architect of creation: our hearts a shelter for the outcast;

**P: our hands open to the stranger.**

L: We are God's people, created in the divine image: to tell others of God's love,

**P: to offer mercy as freely as we have received it.**

L: We are God's children, called to give of ourselves: chosen to serve the lost and lonely,

**P: gifted to minister to a hurting world.**

\* OPENING HYMN                      *'Love Divine, All Loves Excelling'*                      Red Hymnal No. 404

OPENING INVOCATION TO PRAYER

**God, We pray that You would endow us with wisdom, understanding, and grace, helping us to trust in You. Amen.**

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: Jamaica

MORNING PRAYER AND SILENT MOMENTS FOR PERSONAL PRAYER

CHORAL RESPONSE 'Come and Fill'

Taize

*Come and fill our hearts with your peace.*

*You alone, O Lord, are holy.*

*Come and fill our hearts with your peace. Alleluia.*

SCRIPTURE LESSON

John 14:1-14

Liturgist: This is the Word of God. People: **Thanks be to God.**

\* HYMN

'Blessed Assurance'

Black Hymnal No. 473

SERMON

'Against All Odds'

OFFERTORY PRAYER

CHORAL OFFERTORY 'Let All the World in Ev'ry Corner Sing' Gordon Young

*Refrain: Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing, "My God and King!"*

*The heav'ns are not too high, His praise may thither fly.*

*The earth is not too low, His praises there may grow.*

*Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing!*

*The church with psalms must shout,*

*No door may keep them out;*

*But, above all, the heart must bear the largest part.*

*Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing! (refrain)*

\* 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 every way be with you.

**P: And also with you.**

L: Lift your hearts to the One who is the Truth for God's own people.

**P: We offer them to the One who warms them with love.**

L: Sing praises to God, who is our Life.

**P: Glad songs are offered to the One who provides shelter for us.**

### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Hear the brokenness of our lives, God. We cover our ears so we cannot hear the cries of those in need, or You urging us to respond. We rush together to defend every issue that matters to us, but quickly disperse when You would call us to be Your holy people. We shout as loud as we can to cheer on our sports teams, but can manage only whispers when it comes to sharing the good news.**

**Forgive us, our Eternal Guide, and do not hold our sins against us. We lay the garments of our foolishness at Your feet, so You might clothe us in grace and hope. We would feed on the spiritual food which flows from Your heart so we might be strong enough to follow Jesus as He leads us in the Way, the Truth, and the Life.**

### ASSURANCE OF PARDON

You are no longer alone - you are God's Beloved. You are not of this world, but residents of God's Kingdom. You have been filled with forgiveness.

**ALL: Each one of us, all of us, have received God's mercy in Christ.**

**Forgiven, redeemed, made whole - we are a people made one in faith.**

**Thanks be to God. Amen.**

### EUCHARIST PRAYER

**Christ died, trusting in God's promises;**

**God raised Him from the dead, promising the same for us;**

**Christ will come, fulfilling all the promises of God.**

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 (We will sing 'Let us Break Bread Together', Red Hymnal No. 311, v.1 during distribution of the bread and v.2 during distribution of the juice)

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

COMMISSIONING

\* CLOSING HYMN      *'Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ'*      Red Hymnal No. 316

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 He 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

*'Toccata Liturgique'*

Dennis Elliot

*You are invited to sit for the postlude.*

\* \* \* \* \*

**“Our worship ends, let our service begin”**

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**Those serving you today:**

***Ushers:*** Cindy Clement

***Reader:*** Deb Olson

***Flowers:*** Cindy Clement

***Online Streaming:*** Tom Clement

**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 May Birthday** to Ann Dunlevy, Angie Eddy, Sally Flesher, Steve Whitfield

### **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 \*

### **Announcements**

#### **Habitat for Humanity 7 Rivers 2026 Spring Walk to Build**

**Event Location: Grace Episcopal Church, 110 Washington Street, Bath**

**Event Date: May 3, 2026@1:00pm-3:00pm**

It's not too late to join our team, including members of our Youth Group. Speak to Margot Stiassni-Sieracki or Cindy Clement. The Spring Walk to Build is Habitat's largest annual FUNdraiser/Friend-Raiser and supports their mission to build, repair, and modify homes.



## John 14:1-14

14 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. 4 And you know the way to the place where I am going.' 5 Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' 6 Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.'

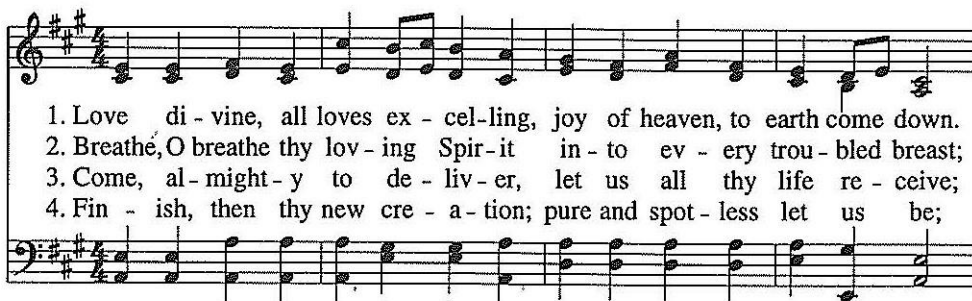
8 Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' 9 Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. 12 Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.'

Liturgist: This is the Word of God.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

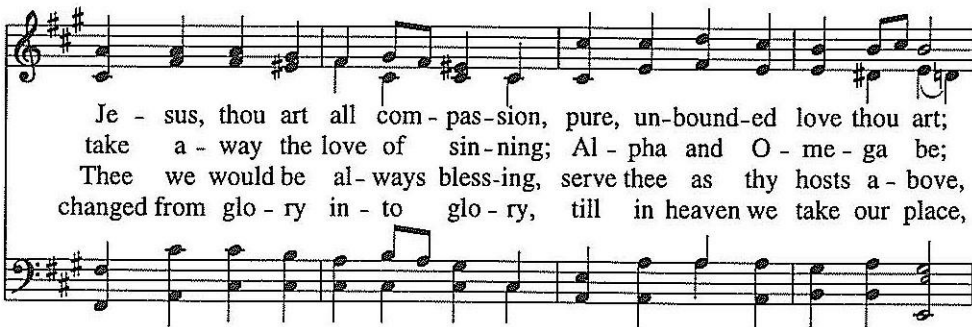
## Love Divine, All Loves Excelling



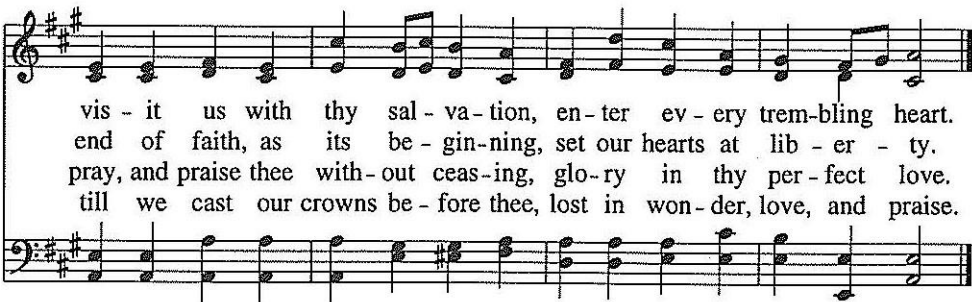
1. Love di - vine, all loves ex - cel - ling, joy of heaven, to earth come down.  
 2. Breathe, O breathe thy lov - ing Spir - it in - to ev - ery trou - bled breast;  
 3. Come, al - might - y to de - liv - er, let us all thy life re - ceive;  
 4. Fin - ish, then thy new cre - a - tion; pure and spot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



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



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



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

# Blessed Assurance

Words: Fanny Crosby, 1873.

Music and Setting: 'Blessed Assurance' or 'Assurance' Phoebe P. Knapp, 1873.  
copyright: public domain. This score is a part of the Open Hymnal Project, 2008 Revision.

♩ = 100

1. Bless-ed a - ssu - rance, Je - sus is mine! O what a fore - taste of glo - ry di - vine!  
2. Per - fect sub - mis - sion, per - fect de - light, Vis - ions of rap - ture now burst on my sight;  
3. Per - fect sub - mis - sion, all is at rest I in my Sa - vior am hap - py and blest,

Heir of sal - va - tion, pur - chase of God, Born of His Spi - rit, washed in His blood.  
An - gels de - scend - ing bring from a - bove E - choes of mer - cy, whisp - ers of love.  
Watch - ing and wait - ing, look - ing a - bove, Filled with His good - ness, lost in His love.

This is my stor - y, this is my song, Prais - ing my Sa - vior, all the day long;

This is my stor - y, this is my song, Prais - ing my Sa - vior, all the day long.

# 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

LINSTEAD  
 LM w. refrain

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.

## Coming Up This Week

Monday, May 4

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

Office Hours 9:30am – 1:30pm

Mah Jongg 6:00pm – 8:30pm

Faith and Development Team Meeting 6:30pm

Tuesday, May 5

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

Office Hours 9:30am – 1:30pm

Wednesday, May 6

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

Sunday, May 10

Sunday Worship 10:00am

Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall following worship

Worship and Music Team meeting following Coffee Hour

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

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Pastoral Care – 207 955-0055

Music Director: Joel Pierce  
Sexton: Mary McKinney  
Office Administrator: Hilary Atwood

Church Office Email – [fccw@myfairpoint.net](mailto:fccw@myfairpoint.net)  
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Church Website – [www.uccwiscasset.org](http://www.uccwiscasset.org)

**John 14:1-14 Against All Odds May 3, 2026 Rev. John Hogue**

Begin with how we perceive things in life. People see things in different perspectives. That is what contributes to the beauty of meetings sometimes. Consider this interaction based on perception.

Following World War II, a general and his lieutenant boarded a British train. They sat across from an attractive young lady and her grandmother. As the train departed, it entered a long tunnel. Total darkness encompassed the train for approximately thirty seconds. In the darkness of those moments, the passengers heard two things - a kiss and a slap. Everyone on board had his or her own outlook of what happened. For example . . . The young lady assumed to herself, "While I'm flattered that the handsome lieutenant kissed me, I'm embarrassed that my grandmother slapped him." The grandmother supposed, "I'm disappointed with the lieutenant, but I'm proud that my granddaughter had the courage to hit him." The general thought, "What in the world . . . why did my lieutenant kiss that civilian young lady and why did she slap me by mistake?"

The lieutenant was the only person on that train who really knew what happened. In that brief period of total darkness, he had the opportunity to kiss an attractive young lady, as well as slap a general.

We laugh at this story—but here's the truth. Against all odds, we all want to know we're going the right way while on earth. That's exactly what's happening in this passage. Jesus says: "Do not let your hearts be troubled... I'm going to prepare a place for you."

Then Thomas—being very honest, and confused speaks up: "Lord, we don't know where you're going. How can we know the way?" Now let's be real. Thomas isn't asking a dumb question. He's asking our question. "Where is life going?" "Where is God in all this?" "How do I get there from here?" I will tackle these questions later but for now I think it is important to note that the Gospel according to John out of all the Gospels is a poet. He has a way with words and a way with mystery and mysticism. Whereas Matthew retells the story in scriptures. Mark is blunt and to the point. Luke being a doctor is reliving details and telling of multilayered parables.

The verse “Do not let your hearts be troubled,” is about the need for Presence, Not Just Answers.

Think about the context of the disciples in this story—this is right before the cross. The disciples don’t just have questions. They have fear, grief, confusion, uncertainty. Sound familiar? We live in a world where hearts are troubled: Health concerns. Financial stress. Loss and grief. A future that feels shaky. Jesus doesn’t start with theology. He starts with comfort. Jesus doesn't say: “Figure it out.” Rather, “Trust Me.”

Then Jesus says something wild: “Whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing... and even greater things.” Now let’s be honest—that sounds like a stretch. Greater than Jesus? But it’s not about power—it’s about reach. Jesus, in the flesh, was in one place at one time. Through us, His love spreads everywhere. Every act of kindness. Every moment of grace. Every word of hope that Jesus is still working.

Although let’s be clear—when Jesus says, “greater works,” I don’t think He meant: Successfully assembling IKEA furniture without leftover screws. Or getting through a Maine winter without complaining once.

Now for tackling those perplexing questions. We almost have an acid reflex when we hear ourselves asking, “What about those who are not Christian?” The question is asked, not so much out of disbelief as of genuine concern. This can be challenging with several perspectives. First, though, we as Christians belong to Jesus Christ, having been joined eternally to him in the waters of baptism, Jesus does not belong to us. We are his, he is not ours! That is something all too often forgotten by many a well-intended evangelist. We are the God’s to be sure; his promises are for us. We are to share this good news with all who will receive it. But we don't control it nor have the authority to place limitations on it. Where did we get the notion that Jesus' statement that he is the way, truth and life pertains exclusively to Christians?

This brings us to a second perspective. Earlier in this gospel Jesus has said, “I have other sheep not of this fold.” Jesus has the freedom to call whomever he chooses, however he chooses, whenever he chooses, even if they may not know

it. This answers that nagging question about the person of another faith tradition who is leading a holy life, who is clearly in contact with the living God but does not confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

This brings us to the third perspective on that vexing question. The apostle Paul reminds us that "In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them." God has acted in Jesus Christ on the world's behalf. What God did in Jesus Christ, God did for the world. What makes us arrogant enough to believe that the outcome depends upon our choice? Even when John speaks of the inherent judgment in Christ's coming-that some love darkness rather than light- he concludes: "Those who do what is true come to the light so that it may be clearly seen that their works have been done in God." There is a unity between the light of the world, who is the way, the truth and life, and the Father who sent him.

Jesus says precisely this following his well-known, "No one comes to the Father except through me." He continues, "If you know me, you will know my Father also." Philip, as confused as most of us, tries to better understand saying, "Show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." Jesus simply asks, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and still you do not know me?" Jesus is the human face of God. He is all of God that we humans have the capacity to comprehend. He has come among us as one of us, for all of us. As he tells us, "To know the Son is to know the Father." There is a unity to this truth.

The scripture makes a profound invitation to trust in Jesus amidst a "troubled" world. He emphasizes that Jesus, as the "Word made flesh," is the intimate, personal note, offering comfort, presence, and a way to live, rather than just a destination.

I believe this text often suggests that Jesus demonstrates what it means to be truly human, and thus truly divine, breaking down the barrier between the two.

In the prior Chapter 13 of John, the famous "Love One Another" commandment is mentioned. In his wider reflection on John's Gospel, this is the recurring theme that connects this Today's passage to the command to love others, acting as a reflection of Jesus' own love in the world.

In essence, John 14:1-14 is not merely about a future afterlife but about experiencing the "fullness of life" in Christ today. There are so many organizations today who are sharing the principals of hospitality, trust, witness and love right now. They are connecting with people. They focus on the "Other": going beyond inviting friends and family to intentionally include strangers, neighbors, or those who are difficult to love. They are breaking down barriers. Making a deliberate choice to see God's image in every person, challenging prejudice. To which I believe we as UCC and other mainline churches are doing. Yet all the while, it is often practiced in small, consistent acts like sharing meals with neighbors. Allow me to share with you some true examples:

Consider Thistle Farms. Founded by Becca Stevens, this organization offers a community of "fierce love" and healing for women survivors of trafficking, prostitution, and addiction. This is their website: <https://thistlefarms.org>.

A pastor in Northern California bridged divides by welcoming migrant farm workers into her community, as detailed in his book No Longer Strangers.

A group of people in North Carolina who, inspired by a story of healing, opened their home (Rutba House) to anyone in need, exemplifying the "New Monasticism" movement of radical hospitality. They are known as the Rutba House.

Every week, we uplift the UCC/Disciples of Christ missionaries of their presence in countries around the world. You can read the countless powerful uplifting stories on our website [www.globalministries.org](http://www.globalministries.org).

In the 1960's-70's West Garfield Park area of Chicago was riddled with gangs and drugs. A church called Bethel New Life took to the streets. With nonviolence and love slowly turned the community around. Bethel members borrowed money from their own personal credit cards to raise funds to buy a run down three story apartment building and made renovations so people could live in those units. Bethel bought a 9.2 acre site of the former St. Anne Hospital that closed and made it into Beth Anne Center. It is now a state of art childcare center and small business center for entrepreneurs. They started their own bank, drug store , senior

housing and cultural center!! What a model and proving hope in their community! They are willing to share their story and replicate this model into communities across the nation. People can reach out to them at Bethel New Life and their website is: [www.bethelnewlife.org](http://www.bethelnewlife.org).

I wish to share with you the parable of two traveling monks who reached a river where they met an attractive young woman waiting to cross. Wary of the current, she asked if they would be willing to carry her. One of the monks hesitated, but the other promptly picked her up into his arms, transported her across the river, and put her down, safely on the other bank. She thanked him and went on her way.

As the monks walked toward the monastery, one brooded, stewing in the toxic elixir of self-righteousness and envy. After an hour, unable to hold his silence, he spoke. "Brother, our spiritual training teaches us to avoid any contact with women, but you picked her up in your arms, held her very close and carried her!" "Brother," the second monk replied, "That is all true. But on the other side of the river, I set her down. It sounds to me as if you are still carrying her."

This is a story about how we can be for every single one of us owned or possessed by the things we carry. We live with an absorbed willful blindness, seeing only what we want to see, and our spirit can be tied up into knots. So here we are.

I am going to ask you to do an experiment with me. Are you ready? We all make daily choices. If you are able, please rise. Like what I mentioned, turn to your right or your left. Practice: Rather have milk chocolate candy turn right or dark candy turn left. Stay where you are. Keep turning to either left or right. Rather have a birthday gift turn right or birthday cake turn left. Go to the doctor, turn right or to the dentist, turn left. Eat a pizza turn right. Eat a salad and turn left. Mow the grass turn right or rake leaves turn left. Grow an inch taller turn right or gain 10 pounds turn left.

If you like to feel loved, turn completely around to the front facing me or don't want to feel loved turn to the back of the room. That got us all on the same page!

Love is a magnet. Love draws us to it. We all want it. Good news? You are beloved and we share that love as a community of faith. I get it, sometimes we get stuck and unsure about life. Wondering where the road went. Maybe today your heart is troubled. Maybe you don't need more answers. Maybe you need presence. The promise of Christ is this: You are not lost. You are not alone. There is that voice, the voice that speaks from above and from within our souls. It whispers softly or declares loudly: "You are my Beloved, on you my favor rests." It certainly is not easy to hear that voice in a world filled with voices that shout: "You are no good, you are ugly; you are worthless; you are despicable, you are nobody" —unless we demonstrate the opposite. Again, that voice speaks softly or loudly- "You are my Beloved, on you my favor rests." We give what we can give: With a smile. With an embrace or handshake. Words of comfort. Know this, here in this sacred and safe space, we say there is a place for everyone. You are unique. You are recognized. Most importantly you are beloved. Amen.