

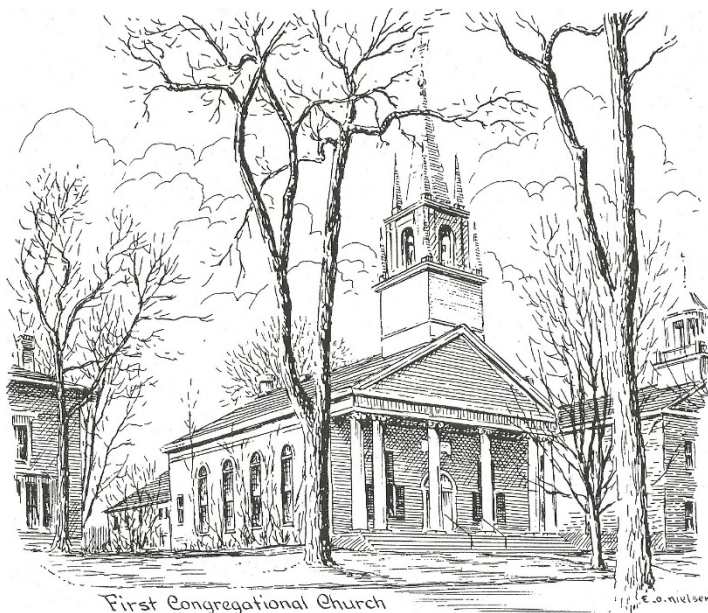
First Congregational Church

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 13, 2025

June 13, 2025
Fifth Sunday after Pentecost
10:00am

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

We joyfully welcome **all** to our worship service whether present or streaming video! The First Congregational Church of Wiscasset is an Open and Affirming Church affiliated with the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ denomination.

You are invited to gather for Coffee, Refreshments and conversation in Fellowship Hall immediately following worship.

For Your Contemplation:

“I am no longer my own, but Thine. Put me to what Thou wilt, rank me with who Thou wilt; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for Thee; let me be laid aside for Thee; let me be full, let me be empty; let me have all things; let me have nothing; I freely and heartily yield all things to Thy pleasure and disposal.”

. . . from an English Covenant Service

PRELUDE *Be Still and Know/Be Still, My Soul* arr. Mark Hayes

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHORAL INTROIT *In the Lord I'll Be Ever Thankful*

* INVITATION TO WORSHIP

Come, let us gather in the awareness of God's Love.

God's Love has brought us to this place; God's love has called us to be a church.

But a “church is not a building, a church is not a steeple, a church is not a resting place, . . .”

“A church is a people.”

We celebrate that God, through the course of history, has expanded the church into 1,200 different languages in almost every country in the world.

The church is God's, not ours. Help us, O God, to expand our vision of You and Your church.

* HYMN

The God of Abraham Praise

No. 2

UNISON PRAYER

Holy Spirit of God, Who gathers the church into one body, gather us once again in Your presence and strengthen the bonds of affection that hold Your people together. Bless us with grace to cooperate with one another in love and service that we may be the signs of Your uniting love in our fractured world. Teach us to show compassion for those in need, to face challenges with imagination, and to counter disappointments with prayerful trust. So Your church may bring forth Your will and Your reign. Amen.

CHORAL ANTHEM

It Is Well With My Soul

arr. John Ness Beck

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 LESSONS

I Kings 17:8 – 24

Luke 7:1 – 10

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

People: Thanks be to God.

* HYMN

In the Midst of New Dimensions

No. 363

SERMON: "How Big Is Your God?" Rev. David C. Myers
Text: "... not even in Israel have I found such faith." ... Luke 7:9

OFFERTORY PRAYER

OFFERTORY *Change My Heart, O God* arr. Mark Hayes

* 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.**

* HYMN *God of Grace and God of Glory* No. 477

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 *Lift High the Lord, Our Banner/Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus*
arr. Mark Hayes

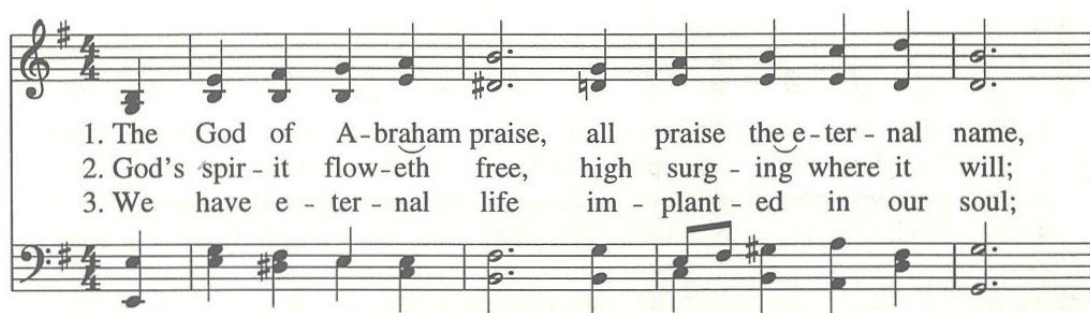
You are invited to sit for the postlude.

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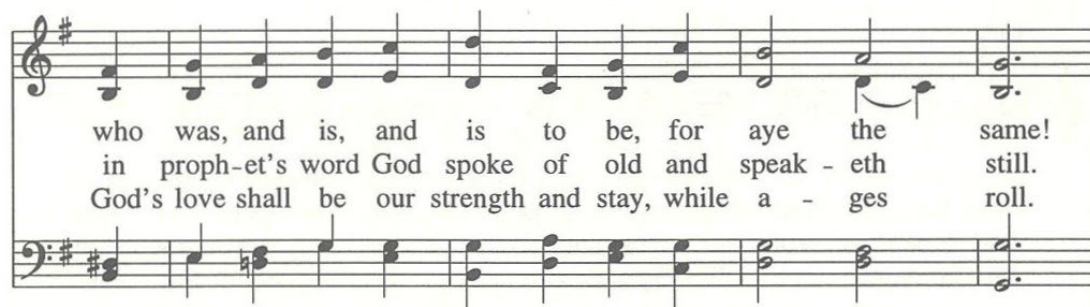
"Our worship ends, let our service begin"

†††

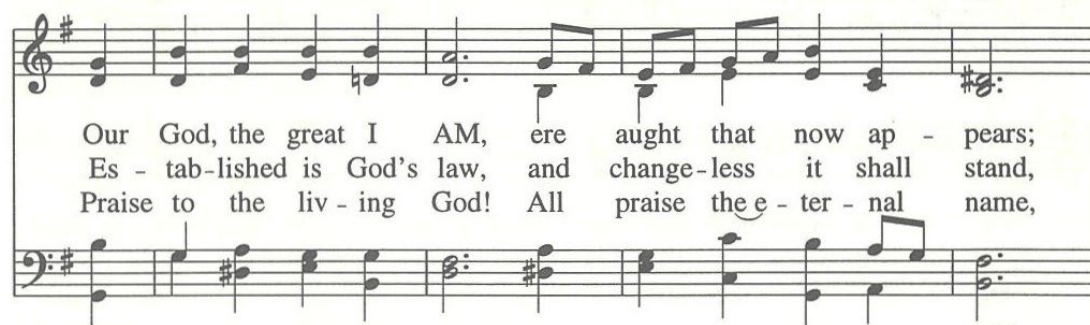
The God of Abraham Praise



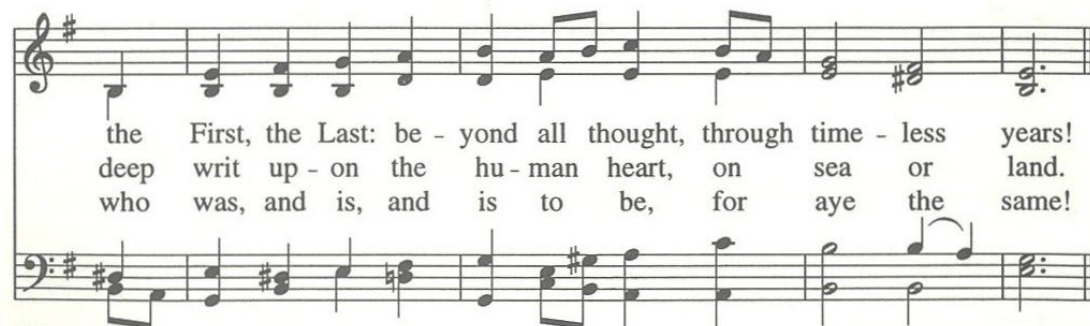
1. The God of A-braham praise, all praise the e-ter-nal name,
 2. God's spir-it flow-eth free, high surg-ing where it will;
 3. We have e-ter-nal life im-plant-ed in our soul;



who was, and is, and is to be, for aye the same!
 in proph-et's word God spoke of old and speak-eth still.
 God's love shall be our strength and stay, while a-ges roll.



Our God, the great I AM, ere aught that now ap-pears;
 Es-tab-lished is God's law, and change-less it shall stand,
 Praise to the liv-ing God! All praise the e-ter-nal name,



the First, the Last: be-yond all thought, through time-less years!
 deep writ up-on the hu-man heart, on sea or land.
 who was, and is, and is to be, for aye the same!

1 Kings 17:8-24

The Widow of Zarephath

Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, ‘Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you.’ So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, ‘Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink.’ As she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, ‘Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.’ But she said, ‘As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die.’ Elijah said to her, ‘Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth.’ She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days. The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah.

Elijah Revives the Widow’s Son

After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill; his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. She then said to Elijah, ‘What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to cause the death of my son!’ But he said to her, ‘Give me your son.’ He took him from her bosom, carried him up into the upper chamber where he was lodging, and laid him on his own bed. He cried out to the Lord, ‘O Lord my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I am staying, by killing her son?’ Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried out to the Lord, ‘O Lord my God, let this child’s life come into him again.’ The Lord listened to the voice of Elijah; the life of the child came into

him again, and he revived. Elijah took the child, brought him down from the upper chamber into the house, and gave him to his mother; then Elijah said, ‘See, your son is alive.’ So the woman said to Elijah, ‘Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth.’

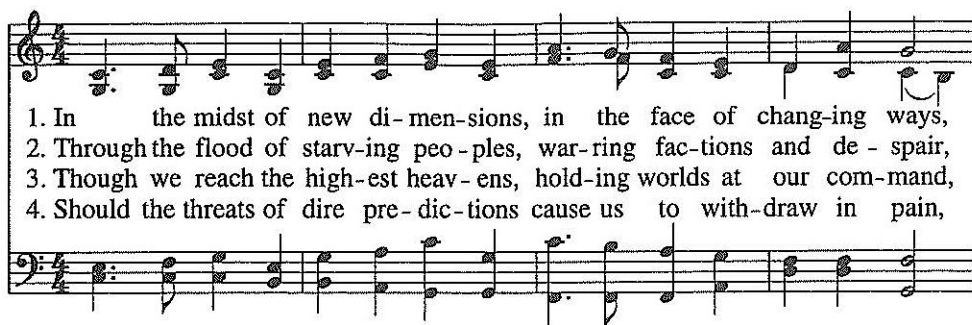
Luke 7:1-10

Jesus Heals a Centurion’s Servant

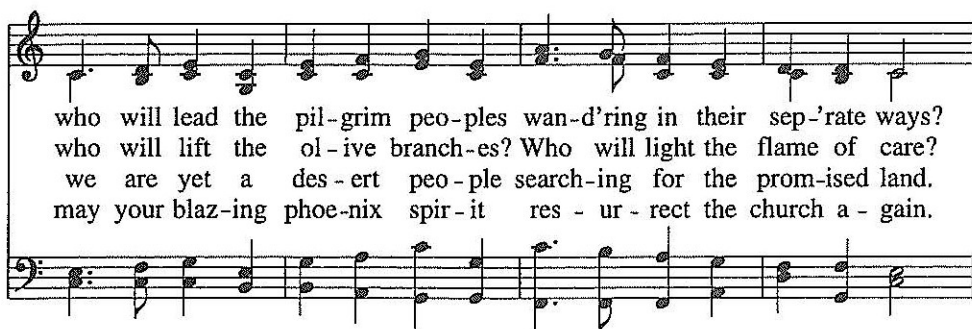
After Jesus had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. A centurion there had a slave whom he valued highly, and who was ill and close to death. When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave. When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, ‘He is worthy of having you do this for him, for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us.’ And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, ‘Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, “Go”, and he goes, and to another, “Come”, and he comes, and to my slave, “Do this”, and the slave does it.’ When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, ‘I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.’ When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

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

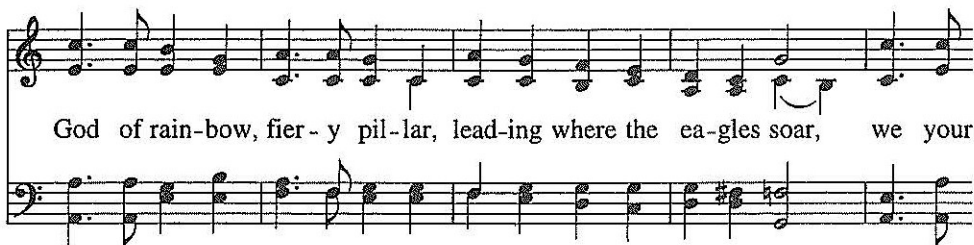
People: Thanks be to God!



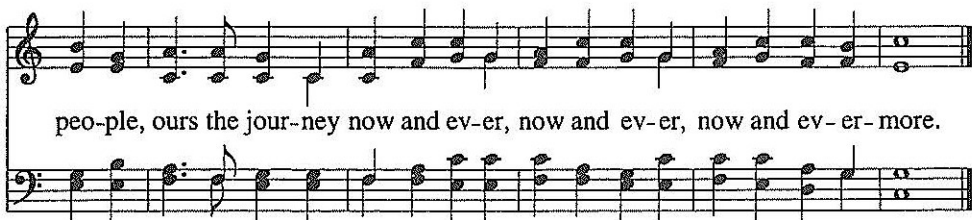
1. In the midst of new di-men-sions, in the face of chang-ing ways,
 2. Through the flood of starv-ing peo-ples, war-ring fac-tions and de-spair,
 3. Though we reach the high-est heav-ens, hold-ing worlds at our com-mand,
 4. Should the threats of dire pre-dic-tions cause us to with-draw in pain,



who will lead the pil-grim peo-ples wan-d'ring in their sep'-rate ways?
 who will lift the ol-ive branch-es? Who will light the flame of care?
 we are yet a des-ert peo-ple search-ing for the prom-ised land.
 may your blaz-ing phoe-nix spir-it res-ur-rect the church a-gain.



God of rain-bow, fier-y pil-lar, lead-ing where the ea-gles soar, we your



peo-ple, ours the jour-ney now and ev-er, now and ev-er, now and ev-er-more.

WORDS: Julian B. Rush, 1985, alt.

MUSIC: Julian B. Rush, 1985; arr. *The New Century Hymnal*, 1995, alt.

NEW DIMENSIONS

87.87 w. refrain

This hymn on diversity was written for a meeting of the Rocky Mountain Conference of United Methodists. Rush is director of the Colorado AIDS Project.

Words, music © 1985 Julian B. Rush

David C. Myers
July 13, 2025

“How Big Is Your God?”

I Kings 17:8 – 24

Luke 7:1 – 10

Text: “. . . , not even in Israel have I found such faith.” . . . Luke 7:9

This Sunday we are challenged by the scripture readings. If we read them and study their implications we might be asking ourselves, “just how big is our God?”

“Just how big is our God?”

That’s the question Elijah asked the widow at Zarepath. When the prophet Elijah visited her in this foreign land now part of Lebanon, then the land of the enemy, God told Elijah that he would meet a widow with a very sick son and that she would feed him (Elijah). This was in the midst of a huge famine, and the widow could scarcely find enough food for herself and her son, who was so severely ill, that “there was no breath left in him.”. And even though she also had been commanded by Israel’s God in a dream to feed Elijah, she none-the-less greeted Elijah with distrust, anger and disbelief. And I quote, “As the Lord you God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my sons, that we may eat it, and die.” And you blame her? I mean, how much attention do you pay to your dreams? She had little food, barely any water and a very sick son. After she did as Elijah had commanded, Elijah took her son, “whose illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him” and healed him.

And the widow of Zarepath, who was from Sidon, belonging to Syria, Israel’s enemy, discovered how much bigger her God could be.

Just how big is our God? Can we sacrifice; can we stretch even a bit more so that our brothers and sisters all over the world, including here at home, can have the basics of life?

Oh, don't get me wrong, our church does a lot. We support our denomination and Conference with its basic mission offerings, we support Church World Service, Feed our Scholars, For Her, Goodwill, The Food Pantry at St. Phillips, Habitat for Humanity, and several others with the proceeds from Mission Fundraising (Wormfest, Summerfest, and the Talent Auction).

We have so much; while others, whether in our own communities or in communities 5 to 18,000 miles away have so little. Can we do more to help the many in need, who often help need the bare necessities of life? As one pastor put it, the good news is that we have plenty of money to do all this – locally, nationally, and globally. The bad news is that it is still in our pockets.

Just how big is our God?

Jesus was always concerned about how big people's God was. Jesus always had concern for the lost; those outside the traditional faith. This morning we are told a story that challenged the faith of the Jews. Jesus told story of a Roman centurion, a soldier who took his ultimate oath of allegiance to Caesar, not the Hebrew faith of Jesus.

The soldier had a slave who was very sick. The centurion knew of Jesus, respected Jesus to the point of allowing the building of the temple on Capernaum. The centurion asked his troops to send for Jesus that his slave might be healed by Him. When Jesus appeared, the centurion said to Jesus, "I am not worthy to have You come under my roof; therefore, I did not presume to come to You. But say the word, and let my servant be healed." (Luke 7:6f)

Jesus recognized faith when he saw it, even when divided by the differences in political authority and religion. And Jesus made note of this. After healing the centurion's slave, Jesus said, "Not even in Israel have I found such faith." For the Jews who heard this, this was heresy. They were the true descendents of Abraham. They had the lock on what faith was.

Certainly, a hated Roman centurion, s soldier of the enemy could **not** have more faith than anyone else in Israel!

It's easy to think that we – and only people like us – have a lock on the secrets of faith, that we even have special privilege with God.

Just how big is **our** God?

Just how big is **your** God?

This morning, we are linked by a Biblical faith with some of the most basic beliefs of the Christian faith – that God exists everywhere in this world. God created our brothers and sisters that live next door and all over the world.

We, not God, created borders that divide on the basis of wealth, race, and beliefs. Our work and our resources are needed to make the world one again

How big can our God be?

Elijah praised the faith of the widow and Jesus praised the Roman centurion because in the act of healing and feeding they showed a huge God. Today we need share with one another – and with the whole world, healing and feeding. Just how big is our God? Or do you have a small god that isolates ourselves from those different than us?

I am going to confess both my faith and why it is so different from the popular faith of many. And please know that I do this with some fear and trembling, for I also know that part of what they preach is very comforting and seemingly very patriotic. But I have always believed that we need both the fire or the prophets and warmth of a comforting God that will take care of us.

First of all, let me say that part of the reason of having the faith I do is my belief that God did gave us the capacity to think and reason with the brain God endowed within us. And to ignore it, especially when it comes to our faith, is not what God intended for us. God wants us to employ all the gifts we have been given, including our reasoning ability.

That leads me to the belief that the Bible is to be taken very seriously, but not literally. There simply are too many contradictions in the Bible to try to believe it and follow it literally. For examples, there are two creation stories

in Genesis. There are two accounts of Jesus' birth in the Gospels. These do not fit together (although we try in our Christmas pageants!). Another example is that Paul said women should remain quiet in church, but Paul also said, "In Christ there is no east nor west, no north nor south, **no male nor female**, no Jew nor Gentile."

And when it comes to Jewish Law, Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill."

And when Peter has his conversion as recorded in Acts 10, God told Him it was ok to eat what was previously unclean – and this cleared the way for the Jesus movement, now called Christianity to be spread outside of those of the Jewish faith – and indeed, it has been spread throughout the whole world!

So, if God told Peter to eat shellfish and several other foods that Leviticus records as an "abomination," and since we believe that our God is still alive and working mighty acts in our lives and world through the spirit, what other "abominations" might be being changed by God's Holy Spirit? Is our God so small we can't let the Spirit work among us?

And then there is the issue of murder. I think the Bible is pretty clear that we are not to murder. Yet we go to war knowing full well that people will die as a result of each other's weapons. Isn't that murder? The Christian history has been replete with religious wars, here and abroad – most notably the Crusades of the Middle Ages. How do we even begin to reckon that with our God and faith? Look how our country stockpiles weapons, and spends more on military than the next closest 7 countries combined!

That leads to practical consequences – our country is facing a critical shortage in our infrastructure that includes, roads, public transportation, water, and utilities. Health care in rural communities. As Jimmy Carter pointed out to about 7 years ago, China has not been engaged in wars for decades, and their infrastructure, economy, and social progress – while not perfect – has developed by the leaps and bounds. Well, actually that is not novel, the US did it immediately after WW I and II in helping the countries we fought **in** and **against** to rebuild their economies, and in so doing developed powerful and strong allies in the process. NATO being the most prominent.

Is our god so small that we do not believe that God will provide and care for us??

Ohhhh, I can hear people disagreeing with me – “our country does this because it is necessary that we do this because people will attack us.”. And it may be true, but I would also ask them to wonder why there has not been a war fought on our soil since the war of 1812 (saving our only “civil” war). And about what do we do with immigration and asylum seekers. Through the Old Testament radical hospitality is encouraged by the Israeli people – to treat the foreigner graciously. In Hebrews 13:2 we are told to “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.”

Some of you may think I am being too political; but I am only trying to be both Scriptural and abide by a faith that has a God that shows us there are no borders to God’s love.

Having to choose which god (small “g”) or God (capital “G”) we serve is not new to us. Back in the Book of Joshua in chapter 24:15 it reads, “Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether it be in the region beyond the River Jordan or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living (those lesser tribal gods would now be equivalent to the belief in nationalism); but as for me and my household, we will love and serve the Lord.”

P A U S E

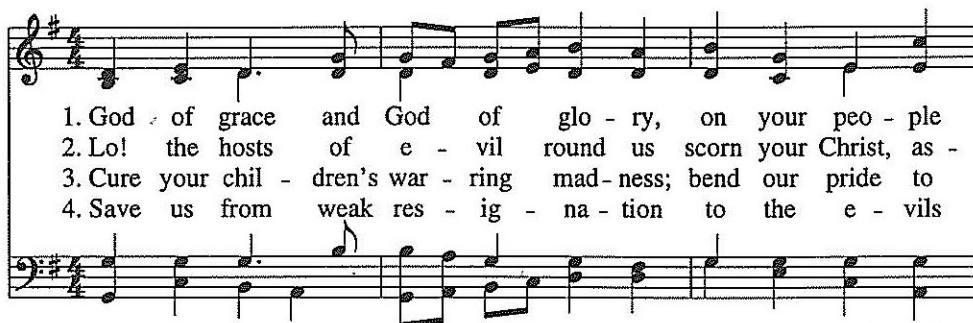
So now you have heard where I stand. And I am well aware that some of you think differently. We all make errors in our theology; and as history has shown, in our patriotism – whether in this country or abroad. I respect your right to think differently than I do. I will still love you. I will do my best to err on the side of love. Why??

Because . . . Brian Zahnd stated it well when he said, “God is not doctrine. God is not denomination. God is not war. God is not law. God is not hate. God is not hell. . . . God is love.” (Brian Zahnd, The Happy Givers)

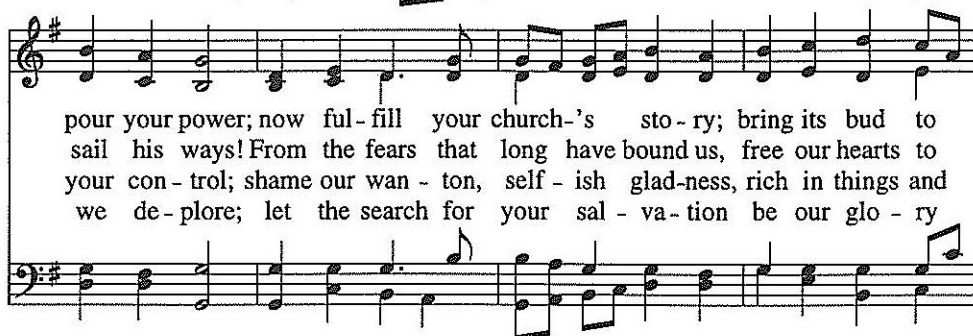
Or, as a Welsh church sign, “I’d rather be excluded for who I include than be included for who I exclude.” After all, God commanded us to love one another like Jesus loved us. And I have yet to find an instance where Jesus didn’t always respond with love and compassion, even to Israel’s enemies, and non-believers, even in His moments of anger. And, . . . as a white rock which was gifted by some anonymous person and left it on the pastor’s desk says, “Just love everyone. I’ll sort them out later.”

For me. it really is quite simple: for as it says in the First letter of John. “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.” (I John 4:7- 8) Am I perfect? Hardly. And neither is anyone else.

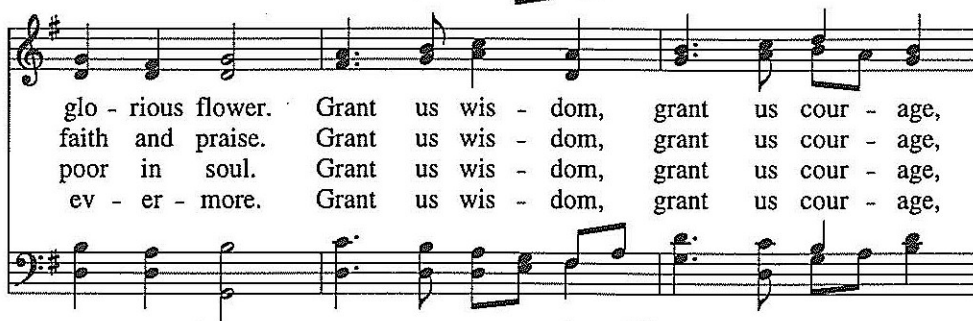
God of Grace and God of Glory



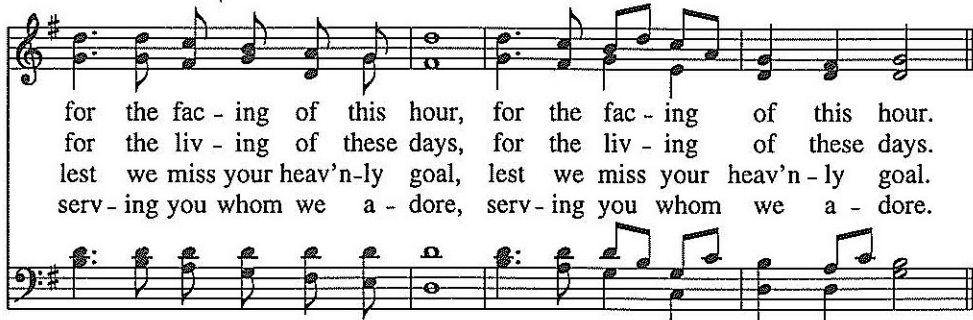
1. God of grace and God of glo - ry, on your peo - ple
 2. Lo! the hosts of e - vil round us scorn your Christ, as -
 3. Cure your chil - dren's war - ring mad - ness; bend our pride to
 4. Save us from weak res - ig - na - tion to the e - vils



pour your power; now ful - fill your church - 's sto - ry; bring its bud to
 sail his ways! From the fears that long have bound us, free our hearts to
 your con - trol; shame our wan - ton, self - ish glad - ness, rich in things and
 we de - plore; let the search for your sal - va - tion be our glo - ry



glo - rious flower. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,
 faith and praise. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,
 poor in soul. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,
 ev - er - more. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,



for the fac - ing of this hour, for the fac - ing of this hour.
 for the liv - ing of these days, for the liv - ing of these days.
 lest we miss your heav'n - ly goal, lest we miss your heav'n - ly goal.
 serv - ing you whom we a - dore, serv - ing you whom we a - dore.

Those serving you today:
Interim Minister: Rev. David Myers
Music Director/Organist: Joel Pierce
Service Streamer: Tom Clement
Ushers: Jan Shaw & Judith Sutter
Reader: Margot Stiassni-Sieracki
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!

The next Study is for the Sunday, July 20, scripture: Luke 10:38 – 42. The story of Martha and Mary.

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 +, Saturday, July 26, 2025. 9:00am – 1:00pm.

Set up, 7:00 – 9:00am.

Clean Up, 1:00 – 3:00pm.

General Mission Fund Offering will be collected on Sunday, July 20th.

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 13:	Choir Practice, 8:10am Sunday Worship – 10:00am
Monday, July 14:	Mah Jongg, 6:00 – 8:30pm
Tuesday, July 15:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm
Wednesday, July 16:	Bible Study , A discussion of upcoming scripture readings, 9:00am in the parlor. Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm
Thursday, July 17:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm
Sunday, July 20:	Choir Practice, 8:10am Sunday Worship – 10:00am General Mission Fund Offering will be collected.
Saturday, July 26:	SummerFest + , 9:00am – 1:00pm Setup 7 – 9am Clean up 1 – 3pm

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.