

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.

January 18, 2026

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

We welcome all to our worship service, whether present in the sanctuary, joining us on streaming video, or watching our service in the future.

FOR YOUR CONTEMPLATION

“Only you can take inner freedom away from yourself, or give it to yourself. Nobody else can.”

Michael A. Singer, *The Untethered Soul: The Journey Beyond Yourself*

PRELUDE

Down in Adoration Falling

Flor Peeters

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS

* CALL TO WORSHIP

L: We wait patiently for our God.

P: We will sing, we will sing new songs of the One who calls us here.

L: We will not chase after other gods.

P: We will sing, we will sing new songs of the One in whom we can trust.

L: We will tell of all God has done for us.

P: We will sing, we will sing new songs of the One whose salvation is for all.

* OPENING HYMN

Crown Him with Many Crowns

No. 210

INVOCATION TO PRAYER

JOYS AND CONCERNS: After each Joy or Concern, Please respond:

Pastor: “God,” Congregation: **“Hear our prayer.”**

LIGHTING OF THE PEACE CANDLE

Global Mission Partner Prayer this week: Syria

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.

DAZZLING BOUQUET (refrain)

**Mine is the church where everybody's welcome.
I know it's true 'cause I got through the door.
We are a dazzling bouquet of every kind of flower.
Jump in the vase, 'cause we've got space for more.**

SPIRITUAL NUGGET 'Transformation'

SCRIPTURE LESSON John 1:28-42
Liturgist: This is the Word of God.
People: Thanks be to God.

* HYMN *Just As I Am* No. 410

SERMON 'What Are You Looking For?'

OFFERTORY PRAYER

OFFERTORY *Dernier Kyrie* Francois Couperin

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

DEDICATION PRAYER

* CLOSING HYMN *Just a Closer Walk with Thee* No. 436

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 *Chorale Prelude on "Gelobet seist du"* J. S.Bach

You are invited to sit for the postlude.

* * * * *

"Our worship ends, let our service begin"

Minister and Teacher: Rev. John Hogue

Music Director: Joel Pierce

Those serving you today:

Ushers: Youth Group

Reader: Deb Olson

Online Streaming: Dewey Harris

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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 January Birthday to Susan Attwood, Ken Cooper, Natalie Dunbar, Lisa Hargreaves, Dewey Harris, Mark Light, Deb Myers

Help Yourself Shelf January Wish List

* jarred spaghetti sauce * 1lb. white rice * drink mixes * canned chicken * tuna *
* cereal * SPAM * mayo * baked beans * toothpaste * dish soap * cat litter *

John 1:28-42

This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The Lamb of God

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’ I myself did not know him, but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.” And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Chosen One.”

The First Disciples of Jesus

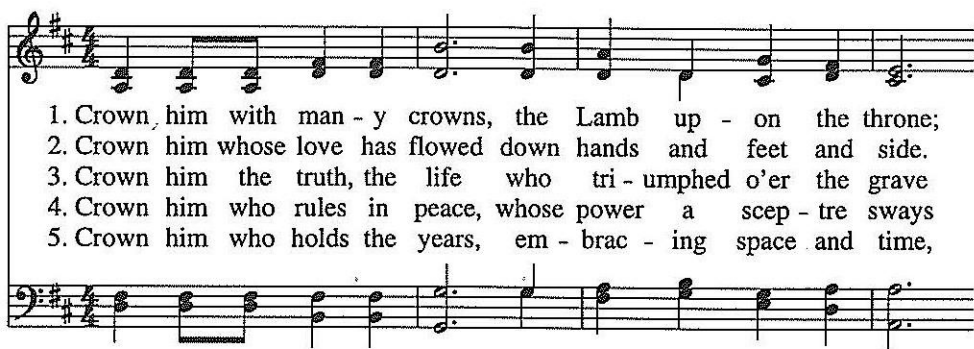
The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).

This is the Word of God.

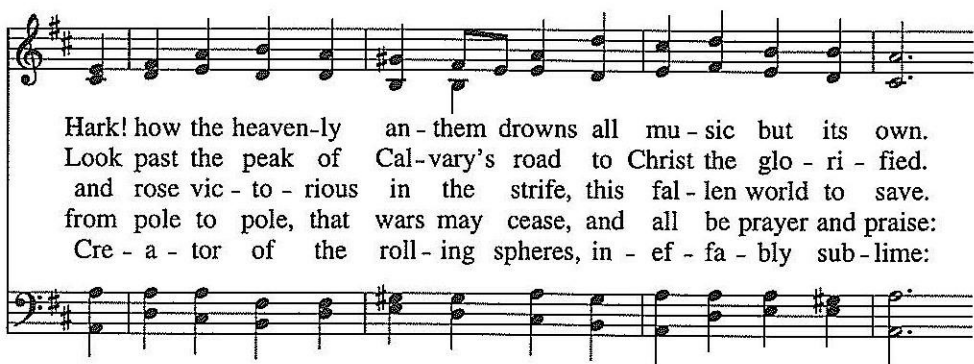
Thanks be to God.

New Revised Standard Version Updated Version

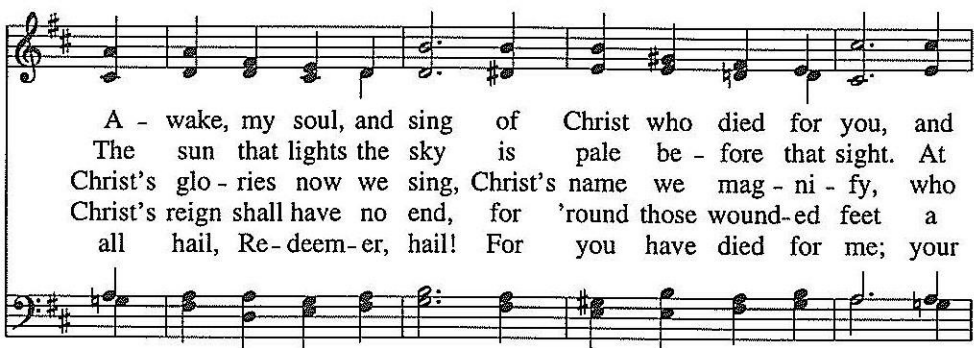
Crown Him with Many Crowns



1. Crown him with man - y crowns, the Lamb up - on the throne;
 2. Crown him whose love has flowed down hands and feet and side.
 3. Crown him the truth, the life who tri - umphed o'er the grave
 4. Crown him who rules in peace, whose power a scep - tre sways
 5. Crown him who holds the years, em - brac - ing space and time,



Hark! how the heaven-ly an - them drowns all mu - sic but its own.
 Look past the peak of Cal-vary's road to Christ the glo - ri - fied.
 and rose vic - to - rious in the strife, this fal - len world to save.
 from pole to pole, that wars may cease, and all be prayer and praise:
 Cre - a - tor of the roll - ing spheres, in - ef - fa - bly sub - lime:



A - wake, my soul, and sing of Christ who died for you, and
 The sun that lights the sky is pale be - fore that sight. At
 Christ's glo - ries now we sing, Christ's name we mag - ni - fy, who
 Christ's reign shall have no end, for 'round those wound-ed feet a
 all hail, Re-deem-er, hail! For you have died for me; your

Just as I Am

Just as I am, without one plea but that your blood was shed for me,
and that you called inviting me, O Lamb of God. I come, I come!

Just as I am, though tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt,
fightings and fears within, without, O Lamb of God. I come, I come!

Just as I am, you will receive, will welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because your promise I believe, O Lamb of God. I come, I come!

Just as I am, your love unknown has broken every barrier down;
now to be yours, and your alone, O Lamb of God. I come, I come!

I Am Weak, but Thou Art Strong

(Just a Closer Walk with Thee)

436



1. I am weak, but thou art strong; Je - sus, keep me from all wrong;
2. Through this world of toil and snares, if I fal - ter, Lord, who cares?
3. When my fee - ble life is o'er, time for me will be no more;
Refrain: Just a clos - er walk with thee, grant it, Je - sus, is my plea,



to Refrain

I'll be sat - is - fied as long as I walk, let me walk close to thee.
Who with me my bur - den shares? None but thee, dear Lord, none but thee.
guide me gent - ly, safe - ly o'er to thy shore, dear Lord, to thy shore.
dai - ly walk - ing close to thee: let it be, dear Lord, let it be.



WORDS and MUSIC: Anonymous

CLOSER WALK
Irr. w. refrain

January 18, 2025 Text: John 1:29-42

“What Are You Looking For?”

If you stand down at Wiscasset Harbor on a foggy morning, you can hear the boats before you see them. You hear the gulls. You hear the halyards clinking against the masts. You smell the salt. You feel the damp air. But until the fog lifts, you can't quite tell where you're going. You might know the harbor well. You might have sailed it for years. But when the fog settles in, every captain slows down. They listen carefully. They watch for markers. They look for the lighthouse. Because when visibility is low, direction matters.

John's Gospel opens in a kind of spiritual fog. People are searching. They're hungry for hope. They're longing for God to act. And then John the Baptist points through the mist and says:

“Look — here is the Lamb of God.” He doesn't give lectures. He points. And two disciples start following Jesus. Jesus turns and asks them the first question of the Gospel: “What are you looking for?”

”What are you looking for?” Jesus asks the two disciples. Now, “What are you looking for?” is a fairly strange question when you think about it. The logical question would be, “What do you want?”

Could this story be telling us something the disciples don't know yet themselves? What people are looking for is not information, answers to questions such as “Who is Jesus?” or “Is this the one?” Or “Am I right about this church business?” Not even the answer to the question of why stories of meeting this man have captured the human heart for generations. What we are looking for depends on the stage of our lives. As young children, we want comfort, security, and to be nurtured. As teenagers we are looking for affirmation of a possible career, being with friends, and what is happening in our social circles. Then for some folks, what we are looking for is to find a person we can spend the rest of our lives with. In my case, where I came from in SW PA, I am pretty much related to everyone. In fact, when I was

dating in my early 20's I brought home a nice young girl from eastern Greene County. After she left for home I always valued the opinion of my maternal grandmother, and I asked her "What do you think Grandma?" She replied- "She is a lovely girl, no question, but she is the daughter of my long last brother." In other words, she was a first cousin and so that ended that relationship. After numerous attempts at dating, after so many cases of various degrees of dynamics I gave up the dating scene.

When I was in seminary, I decided to seek looking for someone in my life through an ad in a magazine, Christian singles. That is how I met Veronica. Now, when we were dating, Veronica mentioned she had a relative in Greene County. Now, upon hearing those words, my heart got a little worrisome. She mentioned her Aunt's name was Van Syoc. My heart sank. My paternal grandmother was Van Syoc. I'm like, what are the odds? Turns out Veronica's Aunt married into the Van Syoc family.

For some people what we are looking for are better housing, better working conditions, and a livelihood. The bigger question in our text leads us to ask ourselves spiritually where is our home, a place to belong, a whole way of life. Jesus knows that what the disciples really want is a place to belong.

Whatever he sees on the faces of these two men panting in front of him after running down the street, whatever he sees, what he says to them is just right and wonderfully inviting: "Come and see." They do go with him. They end up staying, and his story becomes their way of life. Genealogy tells the stories from down through the ages that reveal stories that are haunting, powerful, and how they connect to the greatest story ever told- the ministry of Jesus. "Stories!" "That's who we are!"

"What are you looking for?" says Jesus to people who were told by someone else where he could be found. "Come and see," he said to people who wondered if they had a place in his story. The thing that moves people from one question to the other, from "What are you looking for?" to "Come and see" is the story the church has been called to tell. It's the only story the

church has to tell, the story of its home, the place from which we draw hope and strength and power. In some ways, if the story engages our human soul to the point of a positive change, it leads to growth and transformation like this familiar story:

A man kept complaining that his world was blurry. He blamed the lighting. He blamed the print size. He blamed his aging eyes. Finally, someone suggested an eye exam. The doctor smiled and said, “Your eyes are fine — you just need the right lenses.” When he put on the glasses, everything changed. The world hadn’t changed. He had.

Many people are searching for clarity, peace, purpose — but they’re looking through the wrong lenses. Jesus doesn’t just give us better information; he gives us a new way of seeing. Truth isn’t just something we learn. It’s something that changes how we see everything.

As some of you may know, my family will be looking for a permanent home in the nearby area and sell our Rumford home during the Spring. One of the educational videos I enjoy watching is how people take the Before-and-After House renovations. You’ve seen home renovation shows. The house is dark, cluttered, and broken. Then the renovation begins. Walls come down. Light comes in. The whole place is transformed. However, I am beyond the stage of revocation but it does intrigue me. The owner often says, “It doesn’t even feel like the same house.” That’s what the gospel does. God doesn’t just repaint our lives.

God rebuilds them. “If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17) Jesus doesn’t come just to improve us — he comes to remake us.

Sometimes what we are looking for does not compute from our phones and our experiences change our outlook in life. We call those experiences. When

GPS first came out, they sometimes did not have accurate information. You could end up on a dead end street or better yet, meet a fence. That's what happened to me. One of our former members of the church I served, adopted a child from China. They invited me to meet her. They lived in a gated community. GPS took me to a fence. In order to get to their house, it would take me another 30 minutes to get to the main entrance. Time was of essence. My family taught me to always be on time for appointments. If I followed the main entrance, I would be over 30 minutes late. So, I climbed the fence. Thank God it was not an electric fence. No mind you this was in the summer, and the humidity is torture. Most human beings perspire, when it comes to humidity, I sweat. I made my appointment on time but drenched in my human sweat. The couple never forgot that visit.

Transformation often starts with surrender. I surrendered the fact I had to walk instead of drive. The same with truth. Truth isn't always comfortable. But it always leads us home. A mirror shows you what you look like. A window shows you the world. Many people only want a faith that feels good — a mirror that flatters. Jesus gives us a window — showing us God, our neighbors, and our calling. Truth shows us who we are. Transformation shows us who we can become.

We live in a world full of searching: Searching for meaning. Searching for hope. Searching for peace. And Jesus still asks the same question. It sounds simple. But it's a life-defining question.

Are you looking for certainty? Comfort? Purpose? Healing? Direction? Those two disciples don't even know how to answer. So they say, "Where are you staying?" In other words: Can we come be with you? And Jesus says, "Come and see." Not "Come and agree."

Not "Come and understand everything." But "Come and see." Truth in John's Gospel is not just something you believe. It's someone you follow.

The Chain Reaction of Transformation-One of the two is Andrew. And the first thing Andrew does is go find his brother Simon. He doesn't argue theology. He doesn't explain doctrine. He just says: "We have found the Messiah." And he brings Simon to Jesus. And Jesus looks at Simon and says, "You are Simon... but you will be called Peter." Which is the Bible's way of saying: You are not finished yet. That's transformation. Jesus doesn't just meet people where they are. He names who they can become.

In a town like Wiscasset, people know fog. They know tides. They know the seasons. They know the waiting. They also know what it means to look for steady ground. And Jesus still asks us: What are you looking for? Not just religion. Not just tradition. Not just routine .But truth that shapes our lives. Grace that changes our hearts. Hope that carries us forward.

When you're in the harbor and the fog lifts, the whole shoreline comes into view. The markers line up. The lighthouse stands steady. And suddenly you know where you are. That's what happens when we follow Christ. We don't just get answers. We get direction. We get purpose. We get transformed.

If you and I are to change, to be transformed, to grow into persons who are more fully human and more fully alive, we have to be certainly aware of our vision and patiently work at redressing its imbalances and eliminating any distortions. All real and permanent growth must begin here. A shy person can be coaxed into assuming an air of confidence but it will only be a mask- one mask replacing another. There can be no real change , no real growth in any of us until and unless our basic perspective of reality, or vision is changed. In other words, the famous phrase "What we see is what we get."

Everything depends on this phrase of reference in how you are I look at life, how we see ourselves, the world and God-

Two people looked out from the prison bars. One saw mud, the other saw stars.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

Saturday, February 7, 5:30pm

Sweetheart Shrimp Scampi Dinner with Salads and Desserts; wine options are available. Free will donation towards local missions. **LIMITED SEATING!!!** Reserve your space by texting Rev. John at 207-955-0055. The meal will be cooked by Whitney Inn's Executive Chef Isaac Hogue.

Coming Up This Week

Monday, January 19

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

Office Hours 9:30am – 1:30pm

Mah Jongg 3:00 – 5:30pm

Tuesday, January 20

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

Office Hours 9:30am – 1:30pm

Sheepscot Valley Chorus 7:00-9:00pm

Wednesday, January 21

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

Book Study 4:15pm in the Parlor

ZOOM Bylaws Meeting 7:00-9:00pm

Thursday, January 22

ZOOM Bylaws Meeting 7:00-9:00pm

Sunday, January 25

Sunday Worship 10:00am

Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall following Worship

Annual Meeting 11:30am in the Sanctuary

First Congregational Church UCC
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Shining the Light of Christ
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