

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.



May 11, 2025

May 11, 2025
Fourth Sunday of Easter
Mother's Day
10:00am

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

We joyfully welcome **all** to our worship service, including those who join us on Zoom! We invite you to join us for Coffee and Fellowship in Fellowship Hall immediately following worship.

For Your Contemplation:

“. . . the authors demonstrate our national propensity to reduce our dreams for the future to what we might hope for ourselves. But this individualistic envisioning is shortsighted and destructive because we are all interconnected, in our vulnerability and need.
. . . Thomas Troeger, Yale Homiletics Professor

PRELUDE

We Gather Together

arr. John Carter

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHORAL INTROIT

Worthy is the Lamb

* INVITATION TO WORSHIP

O God, by Your cross You destroyed the curse of the tree.

By Your burial You slayed the dominion of death.

By Your rising You enlightened the whole human race.

O Benefactor, Christ our God, we give glory to You!

* HYMN

Jesus, Joy of Our Desiring

No. 106

UNISON PRAYER

O God our Shepherd, our gate, our lamb: You lead us into Your pasture. Guide us to Your clear streams of still waters. Set before us a table in the presence of our enemies. Tame the wolf at our gate. We pray, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHORAL ANTHEM

If You Search with All Your Heart

Craig Courtney

JOYS AND CONCERNS: After each Joy or Concern please respond:
Pastor: "Lord," Congregation: "Hear our prayer."

MORNING PRAYER " If Mother's Day" by Estelle Easterling
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 *Amen*

SCRIPTURE LESSONS Revelation 7:9 – 17
Luke 15:3 – 7
John 10:22 – 30

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

People: Thanks be to God.

* HYMN *The King of Love My Shepherd Is* No.87

SERMON: "Imagine" Rev. David C. Myers

Text: "They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe every tear from their eyes." . . . Revelation 7:16 – 17

OFFERTORY PRAYER

OFFERTORY MUSIC *Ave Maria* arr. Eugenie Rocherolle

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 *Savior, Like A Shepherd Lead Us* No. 429

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

Soon and Very Soon

arr. Jack Schrader

You are invited to sit for the postlude.

* * * * *

“Our worship ends, let our service begin”

† † †

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

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Jesus, Joy of Our Desiring

1. Je - sus, joy of our de - sir - ing, ho - ly wis - dom,
2. Through the way where hope is guid - ing, hark, what peace - ful

love most bright; drawn by you, our souls as - pir - ing soar to
mu - sic rings; where the flock, in you con - fid - ing, drink of

un - cre - at - ed light. Word of God, our flesh that fash - ioned,
joy from death - less springs. Theirs is beau - ty's fair - est plea - sure;

with the fire of life im - pas - sioned, striv - ing still to
theirs is wis - dom's ho - liest trea - sure. You will ev - er

truth un - known, soar - ing, dy - ing round your throne.
lead your own in the love of joys un - known.

WORDS: Martin Janus, 1661; tr. anon., alt.
MUSIC: Johann Schop; harm. J. S. Bach, 1723

JESU, JOY OF MAN'S DESIRING
87 87. 88 77

Revelation 7:9 – 17

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying,

“Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, singing,

“Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.”

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?” I said to him, “Sir, you are the one that knows.” Then he said to me, “These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

For this reason they are before the throne of God,
and worship Him day and night within His temple,
and the One who is seated on the throne will shelter them.
They will hunger no more, and thirst no more;
the sun will not strike them,
nor any scorching heat;
for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their Shepherd,
and He will guide them to springs of the water of life,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.’

Luke 15:3 – 7

So Jesus told them this parable: “Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.” Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.

John 10:22 – 30

At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around Him and said to Him, “How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Messiah, tell us plainly.”

Jesus answered, “I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name testify to Me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to My sheep. My sheep hear My voice. I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of My hand. What my Father has given Me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father’s hand. The Father and I are one.”

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

People: Thanks be to God!

The King of Love My Shepherd Is

87

1. The King of love my shep - herd is, whose
 2. Where streams of liv - ing wa - ter flow, my
 3. Per - verse and fool - ish oft I strayed, but
 4. In death's dark vale I fear no ill, with
 5. Thou spread'st a ta - ble in my sight, thy
 6. And so through all the length of days thy

good - ness fail - eth nev - er; I noth - ing lack if
 2. ran - somed soul he lead - eth, and where the ver - dant
 yet in love he sought me, and on his shoul - der
 4. thee, dear Lord, be - side me: thy rod and staff my
 bless - ed grace be - stow - eth, and O what trans - port
 6. good - ness fail - eth nev - er; Good Shep - herd, may I

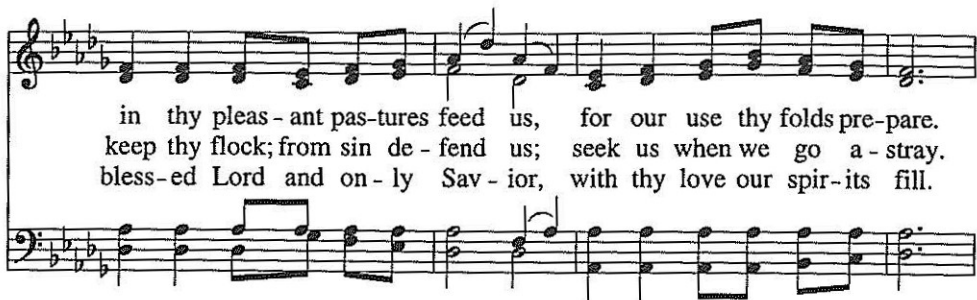
I am his, and he is mine for - ev - er.
 2. pas - tures grow, with food ce - les - tial feed - eth.
 gen - tly laid, and home re - joic - ing brought me.
 4. com - fort still, thy cross be - fore to guide me.
 of de - light from thy pure chal - ice flow - eth!
 6. sing thy praise with - in thy house for - ev - er.

WORDS: Henry W. Baker, 1868, alt.

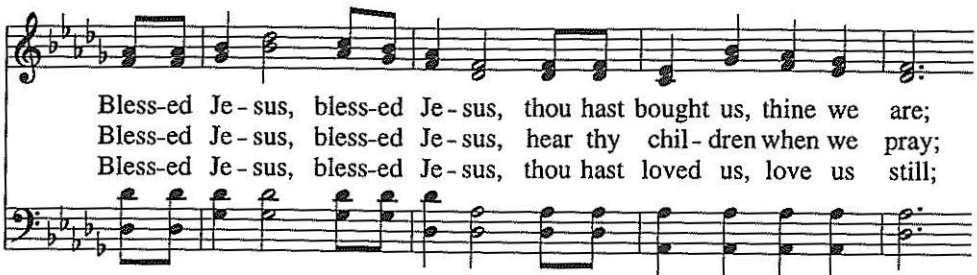
ST. COLUMBA



1. Sav-ior, like a shep-herd lead us, much we need thy ten-der care;
 2. We are thine; in love be-friend us; be the guard-ian of our way;
 3. Ear-ly let us seek thy fa - vor; ear - ly let us do thy will;



in thy pleas - ant pas-tures feed us, for our use thy folds pre-pare.
 keep thy flock; from sin de - fend us; seek us when we go a - stray.
 bless-ed Lord and on - ly Sav - ior, with thy love our spir-its fill.



Bless-ed Je - sus, bless-ed Je - sus, thou hast bought us, thine we are;
 Bless-ed Je - sus, bless-ed Je - sus, hear thy chil - dren when we pray;
 Bless-ed Je - sus, bless-ed Je - sus, thou hast loved us, love us still;



bless-ed Je - sus, bless-ed Je - sus, thou hast bought us, thine we are.
 bless-ed Je - sus, bless-ed Je - sus, hear thy chil - dren when we pray.
 bless-ed Je - sus, bless-ed Je - sus, thou hast loved us, love us still.

David C. Myers

May 11, 2025

“Imagine”

Revelation 7:9 – 17

Luke 15:3 – 7

John 10:22 – 30

Text: “They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”

. . . Revelation 7:16-17

My experience with sheep is limited. When in the region of Galilee in Israel I have watched them grazing from a distance. I have seen them be shepherded to “still waters”. At the Union County Fair in Maine, I even saw them being shorn. And I *really* like lamb chops and shish kebobs. Ok, maybe that one shouldn’t count!

Most of what I have heard about sheep is unflattering. They are rather stupid, and lack in initiative. I’ve heard that when they graze, they never pay attention to where they are grazing and they just keep eating until they have separated themselves from the flock. In the Holy Lands there are stories of them eating themselves off the edge of a steep cliff!

Furthermore they really don't know how to drink. Shepherds have to lead them to "still waters" because if they drink where there are waves or significant ripples they will literally inhale the water and drown.

Those are traits that indicate to me that sheep are intellectually challenged.

Sheep are not playful. Lambs have a winsome charm, but the adult animal is stolid and rather boring. Although there may be some variation in color, most sheep resemble every other sheep in the flock. To see one sheep is to have seen them all.

So having said all that, this morning – Mother's Day – we encounter Bible readings that refer to us as sheep. I don't know about you, but I am not really pleased to be grouped with sheep, and I suspect that I am not alone in this. Our society places a high value on ingenuity, creativity and individuality. Our society tells us it is better to be a leader than a follower. Can you imagine parents urging their children to be good sheep, to aim for mediocrity in academics and sports?

No, we admire people with high levels of energy and a zest for exploration.

Let's face it, to be a good sheep is not part of the American dream.

To the best of my knowledge, there is no such thing as an independent or self-made sheep.

A sheep needs a shepherd to guide and to care for it – and in dire straits – to rescue it. There is nothing sentimental about this relationship: for the sheep it is a matter of survival, and for the shepherd it is a matter of economy. The sheep are valuable for wool and fur, and eventually food; but they are not pets to be cuddled or get sentimental about.

Although all sheep look alike to my eye, a good shepherd knows his sheep as individuals. Each one is worthy of his care and attention. In the story of the lost sheep in Luke's Gospel, Jesus is trying to give His hearers some idea of God's love for the seemingly insignificant individual. He tells the story of the shepherd who leaves the flock to search for the troublesome stray. For all we know, it was a scruffy sheep, the runt of the flock. But the shepherd rejoices as he carries it home.

I've had that experience of being known by a Shepherd, cared for and even carried.

When I was a wee little lad I remember going on long trips to visit Aunt Rachel and Uncle Howard. Sometimes mom and dad would leave after work on Friday and during the evening we would drive the roads between Orono and Auburn, Maine. It is a trip that now takes just about 2 hours, but back in the dark ages when I was a wee little tyke (and before Interstate 95 was built); it took a good 4 hours.

Inevitably, with the hum of the tires being my lullaby, I would fall asleep on the trip. When we arrived, my dad would wrap a blanket around

me and pick me up like a sack of potatoes and carry me into the house and plop me down in a bed. I was only vaguely aware of this, but I was so glad to be able to trust them entirely. My mother and father were taking care of everything – they were my shepherds.

Of course, I now realize this is not the way such things have been for all people. The older I grow the more I realize how privileged I was for being treated with such love.

Nevertheless, it is this kind of Godly care that the Biblical writers of today's lessons envision for us all. You can see it in the Psalmist who says that "the Lord is my shepherd." You can picture it in the passage from the Gospel of John: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." You can hear its echoes in the visionary language of the writer of the book of Revelation: "For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their Shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."

This is a vision of faith.

But, what in the world does this say to the parents of children who have been victims of the violence of drug dealers protecting their turf?

What does this unrealistic scene have to do with our city streets where people live in cardboard cartons or sleep under a blanket of newspapers?

It's so easy to write them off, to lump them together, and to put them in a safe place in our lives.

Oh, how easy it is to turn people into sheep (you know, if you've seen one sheep, you seen them all), – *those* people who “look alike.” The boisterous, slightly threatening teenagers who rush onto the subway, the homeless who warm themselves on sidewalk grates and huddle in doorways, the frail aged lined up in their wheelchairs in nursing home corridors, the caged young men in our jails and prisons – they all can become sheep. When I see pictures or refugees, those victims of indescribable suffering, they begin to look alike. Even the individual child with pleading eyes begins to look like every other starving child.

I turn people into sheep because it is easier that way. It shields me from being touched by their pain, and it helps me deny my kinship with them. But unfortunately, it lets me forget that I am a sheep too.

It's quite all right to be a sheep as long as we pay attention and hear the Shepherd's voice. The essential, crucial point is this: the Good Shepherd knows His sheep.

I yearn to be known, and at the same time I fear it. Most of the time, we let ourselves be known only in bits and pieces and we learn to know others in the same way. My family *thinks* they know me. Foolishly, I think I know myself. But I want to be known on my own terms – a carefully constructed and edited version, not one of the sheep who gets lost. I certainly don't want to be known as a sheep that can't find his way.

To be *fully* known is not possible in our human relationships, but it is the foundation of our relationship with Christ. To be known, *fully* known, is both painful and profoundly comforting. We accept the humble status of sheep, let our masks and defenses drop away, and allow the shepherd to carry us on His shoulder and occasionally poke us with His staff. Sometimes we are thwarted . . . “I wasn’t going to wander too far, honest!” But we can listen for the Shepherd’s voice and rejoice because God knows each of us in our blundering sheepish flock. This is the assurance of John’s Gospel.

And the author of Revelation also offers us comfort and assurance. The words from Revelation remind us that the ultimate and intended goal of creation is the assurance, the comfort and guidance of the Shepherd Who gathers all who are bruised and abandoned and mistreated into a community where: “They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat.”

A dream this great is worth dreaming. *Imagine* a city where no one craved drugs because reality was not so horrible that people addicted themselves to escape from the boredom and lack of worth that they felt in their hearts.

Imagine a work place where no one hungered to know that their life meant more than the Friday paycheck and the weekend.

Imagine a world where people did not feel withered by the heat and pressure of unreasonable job pressures or by the corrosive effects of racism and sexism.

Imagine a world where terrorism is not even thought of. Imagine a world where all people feel secure in who they are and don't feel that they need to call attention to a cause by destroying other people.

To imagine such a world is not to escape its unreality. It is rather to see that world as God wants for us in light of its richest and best possibility. We pray that way when we say, "Thy Kingdom come Thy will be done **on earth** as it is in heaven."

Note, though, how this vision is not simply a vision of individual escape. John does not dream of how he will ignore everyone else while he enjoys the benefits of a personal relationship to Jesus and God. He does not dream of winning a state lottery and leaving everyone else behind. Quite to the contrary, John speaks throughout this passage about "they", thus indicating that there is an entire faithful community who knows the joy of God's care.

To be the church is to hold up this communal vision of care and guidance from the One Who is our creator and sustainer.

Such a vision is difficult to sustain because our culture tends to be overwhelmingly individualistic. Thomas Troeger comments on the writings of Robert Bellah and associates, particularly, ***Habits of the Heart*** and ***The***

Good Society. Troeger comments, “In each case, based on extensive interviews and a review of significant literature starting with the founding of the nation, the authors demonstrate our national propensity to reduce our dreams for the future to what we might hope for ourselves. But this individualistic envisioning is shortsighted and destructive because we are all interconnected, in our vulnerability and need.” The genius of John, the author of the Book of Revelation, is that he understands this. He offers up a vision not just of individuals, but a redeemed community that finds its source and center in the praise and worship of God.

To trust this vision is to feel what I felt as a wee little lad being lifted out of the back seat of my parents 1950 Dodge. This feeling does not lead to complacency or arrogance. It leads to the exact opposite. It leads to courage to stand for justice and to do justice. We do not fear what the world can do to us because we know of God’s everlasting protection and God’s intention to be Lord of a world in which every tear shall be wiped from our eyes.

Like sheep gathering around The Good Shepherd, Who knows us by name, and seeks us out, let us remember that our Lord is the Good Shepherd, Who leads us to still waters with goodness and mercy. A Good Shepherd Who takes care of the entire flock – all the sheep, not just you and me.

Imagine that!

First Congregational Church UCC
Wiscasset, Maine
Notice of Special Congregational Meeting
To be held on
May 18, 2025
11:15am

Call: In accordance with its by-laws, members of the First Congregational Church, UCC of Wiscasset, Maine, are hereby notified that a special congregational meeting will be held in person and on Zoom on Sunday, May 18, 2025, at 11:15, following worship.

The purpose of this meeting is to vote on the Call Agreement between First Congregational Church of Wiscasset and the proposed candidate to be our settled Pastor.

Members without internet capability or with limited access will be able to call in to participate. More information regarding how to access the meeting will be shared as the meeting date draws closer.

May 4, 2025
Becky Lenz
Church Clerk

News from the Pastoral Search Committee

On Saturday, May 17th at 5:30 we invite you to a potluck supper where you can meet and converse with a candidate for the position of settled pastor.

At this time the candidate has not yet told their current church that they might be leaving, so we can't give you details now (notice the gender neutral pronouns!), but perhaps one little fact will be of interest. This candidate currently lives in Maine! A written bio will be provided that evening. The candidate will provide the sermon the next morning, and a congregational meeting will be held immediately after worship to vote on terms of call.

Please bring food of your choice to share with others on the 17th.

If we have all desserts, we will thank God for the sweetness of life.

If we have all vegetables, we will thank God for keeping us healthy.

If we have a lot of protein, we will thank God for maintaining our strength.

Gluten free options are welcome, and if your dish contains nuts or other known allergens, please bring a piece of paper that mentions the ingredients.

Talent, Goods and Services Auction
Sunday, June 8 following 11:15 Potluck lunch
First Congregational Church of Wiscasset
(as of May 8, 2025)

I T E M	how many	minimum bid	provider
Visit Las Cruces, NM (4 days) Lodging, transportation, 2 meals/day guide service and much more	1	\$200	Clements
Accordion Concert (90 minutes) At your home	1	\$75.	J. Grosser
Texas Barbecue Up to 12 people (Ribs, Pulled pork, Chicken Collard Greens, Homemade Beans, Cornbread, Desserts and drinks	1	\$25/person	Myers
4 Hours of Yardwork Weeding, planting, mowing Must be done June – September	1	\$20	C. Clement
Sewing:			
Table Runner	1	\$20	M. Speed
Baby Quilt	1	\$30	
Lap Quilt	1	\$50	
You pick and buy fabric and design			
Window Washing (including screens) Must be done June – September	TBA	\$5 per window	C. Clement
Handsewn felt appliques Must be done June – September	TBA	\$5 per applique	C. Clement

***Watch for More Items Coming in Daily!**

Those serving you today:
Interim Pastor: Rev. David Myers
Music Director/Organist: Joel Pierce
Ushers: Cindy Clement & Becky Lenz
Reader: Deb Olson

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Council Meeting, Wednesday, May 14, 6:30pm in Fellowship Hall.

News from the Pastoral Search Committee

On Saturday, May 17th at 5:30 we invite you to a potluck supper where you can meet and converse with a candidate for the position of settled pastor.

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Please bring food of your choice to share with others on the 17th.

Note from Sarah Oeste, New position at 2nd Congregational Church, Newcastle

I want to thank you and everyone at FCC for being so welcoming to me over the past couple of years! I have truly enjoyed playing every month at FCC. The warmth and kindness I've experienced there gives me a little more hope in these times.

As you might have heard, I have just accepted the position of Music Director at Second Congregational Church. I am so grateful for the opportunities and growth that I've been given and I'm excited to grow as a musician (and organist/choral director). Of course, I am happy to play at FCC whenever I am able, and to work with Joel to coordinate music between our two churches.

Thank you to everyone again, I feel so lucky!

Sarah Oeste

Fundraising Talent and Services Auction and Pot-Luck Luncheon is set for June 8 after church. Come enjoy a Pot-Luck luncheon and the Auction to follow.

Coming Up:

Sunday, May 11:	Choir Practice, 8:10am Sunday Worship – 10:00am Worship & Music Team to meet after church Youth Group, 11:45am
Monday, May 12:	Mah Jongg, 6:00pm – 8:30pm
Tuesday, May 13:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm
Wednesday, May 14:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm Organ Society Annual Luncheon Feed Our Scholars(FOS), 10:30am Council Meeting , 6:30pm in Fellowship Hall
Thursday, May 15:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm
<p>Saturday, May 17th at 5:30, we invite you to a potluck supper where you can meet and converse with a candidate for the position of settled pastor. Please bring food of your choice to share with others on the 17th.</p>	
Sunday, May 18:	Choir Practice, 8:10am Sunday Worship – 10:00am Special Congregation Meeting after church, 11:15am Youth Group, 11:45am