

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.



September 28, 2025

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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

“Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.”

Helen Keller

PRELUDE

Largo

George Handel

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME from Rev. John, ANNOUNCEMENTS from Liturgist

INTROIT

In the Garden

C. Austin Miles

* CALL TO WORSHIP

L: The word has come for us from God:

P: who promises to shelter us under the wings of hope and grace.

L: The word has come to us from Jesus:

P: who encourages us to remember the good news we have received.

L: The word flows to us from the Spirit:

P: who reminds us to place our hope and trust in God.

* OPENING HYMN

Come, Thou Almighty King

No. 9

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.

‘*’ Please stand as you are able.

Bold print indicates congregational spoken or sung responses.

SPIRITUAL NUGGET ‘Strength’

CHORAL DUET *A Living Prayer* Ron Block, arr. by Paul Cappers

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: Indonesia

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.

PRAYER RESPONSE *Instruments of Your Peace* Kirk and Deby Dearmani

SCRIPTURE LESSON 1 Timothy 6:6–19, NRSV Updated
Liturgist: This is the Word of God.
People: Thanks be to God.

SERMON ‘Character Building’

OFFERTORY PRAYER

OFFERTORY *Clang Bucket Rag* Paul Cappers

* 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.**

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

Rondo from Sonata K 545

Amadeus Mozart

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: Lisa Hargreaves and Nancy Roby

Online Streaming: Jenny Surgenor

Reader: Veronica Hogue

Flowers: Ron Sanchez

**Permission to podcast/stream the music in this service obtained from
One License with license # A-7314.*

1 Timothy 6:6-19

Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it, but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will bring about at the right time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches but rather on God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

This is the Word of God.

Thanks be to God.

New Revised Standard Version Updated Version

Come, Thou Almighty King

9

1. Come, thou al - might - y King, help us thy
 2. Come, thou in - car - nate Word, by heaven and
 3. Come, ho - ly Com - fort - er, thy sa - cred
 4. To thee, great One - in - Three, e - ter - nal

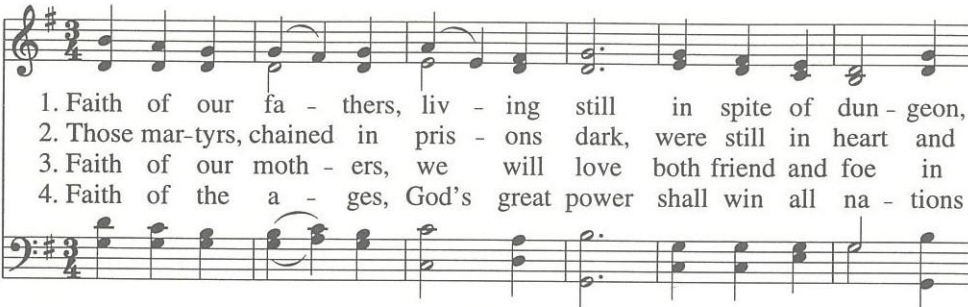
name to sing; help us to praise: Sov-ereign, all
 earth a - dored; our prayer at - tend: come, and thy
 wit - ness bear in this glad hour! Thou who al -
 prais - es be hence ev - er - more! Thy sov-ereign

glo - ri - ous, o'er all vic - to - ri - ous,
 peo - ple bless, and give thy word suc - cess;
 might - y art, now rule in ev - ery heart,
 maj - es - ty may we in glo - ry see,

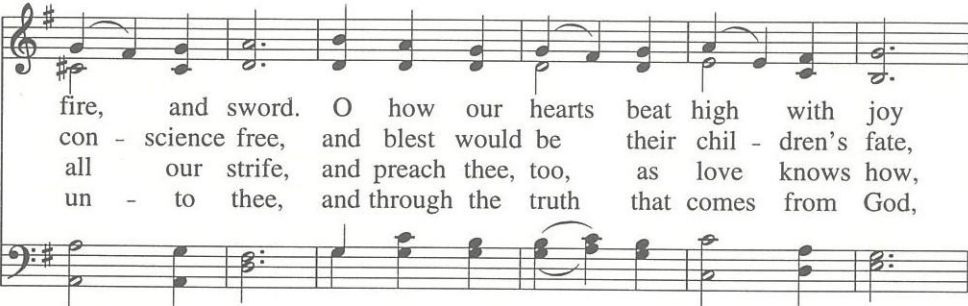
come, and reign o - ver us, An - cient of Days.
 Spir - it of ho - li - ness, on us de - scend.
 and ne'er from us de - part, Spir - it of power.
 and to e - ter - ni - ty love and a - dore.

Faith of Our Fathers

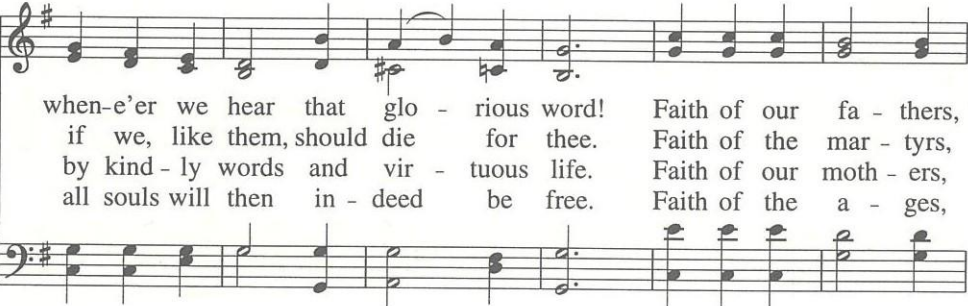
418



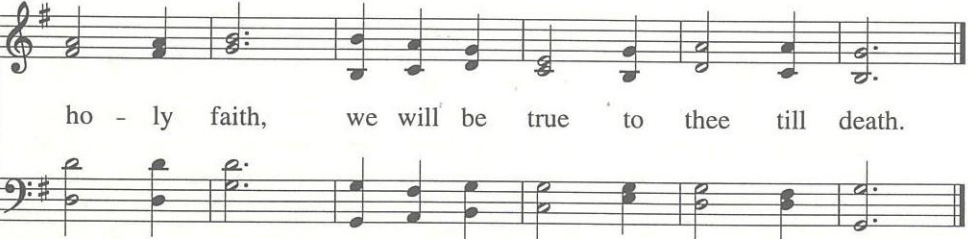
1. Faith of our fa - thers, liv - ing still in spite of dun - geon,
 2. Those mar - tyr - s, chained in pris - ons dark, were still in heart and
 3. Faith of our moth - ers, we will love both friend and foe in
 4. Faith of the a - ges, God's great power shall win all na - tions



fire, and sword. O how our hearts beat high with joy
 con - science free, and blest would be their chil - dren's fate,
 all our strife, and preach thee, too, as love knows how,
 un - to thee, and through the truth that comes from God,



when-e'er we hear that glo - rious word! Faith of our fa - thers,
 if we, like them, should die for thee. Faith of the mar - tyr - s,
 by kind - ly words and vir - tuous life. Faith of our moth - ers,
 all souls will then in - deed be free. Faith of the a - ges,



ho - ly faith, we will be true to thee till death.

WORDS: Frederick W. Faber, 1849, alt.
 MUSIC: Henri F. Hemy, 1864; adapt. James G. Walton, 1874

ST. CATHERINE
 88.88.88

From a Protestant Huguenot upbringing Frederick Faber was led by Henry Newman and the English Oxford Movement into the Roman Catholic Church. His original version read, 'Faith of our Fathers! Mary's prayers shall keep our country fast to thee.'

Rev. John Hogue **1 Timothy 6:6- 19 'Character Building'**

Two little boys were sitting together in a church during a wedding ceremony. As the couple said “I do”, one of the little boys leaned over to the other and asked, “I wonder how many partners a person can have?” The second little boy looked at his friend and said, “One can have 16 partners.” “How do you know that?” The first little boy asked. “Weren’t you listening? The minister just said it. Four better, four worse, four richer, and four poorer.” It is amazing what people truly hear and their perceptions. Clearly, not a good response for integrity or character.

Our text is about character and money. The text provides incredible insight to our living with partners , people and living with awareness of our eyes with meaning and purpose. When we overemphasize wealth and status, we overlook human suffering and injustice. When human beings love money and privilege we inspire evil.

War and torture are great evils. Environmental catastrophes caused by corporate greed, kill and destroy our world. Personal moral failings like apathy, total silence and ignorance contribute to injustice and prejudice. The crimes of nations and institutions can be immensely evil.

Political and corporate institutions controlled by those who seek power and wealth can inflict more suffering than can any individual alone. The evils the text speaks of are not only personal but are on a larger scale. Corporate greed

impoverishes millions through unsafe working conditions and poverty level wages. Nations wage war and slaughter millions over resources and power.

That is not to say we cannot have money or wealth, it is the love of money that causes havoc. A study by professors Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers of the University of Michigan found that people with the highest incomes report the greatest satisfaction with their lives. The differences are spread across income lines. For example, only 35% of people making less than \$35,000 a year say they are “very happy,” versus 100% of people making \$500,000 or more. In a recent financial integrity class I took in Advance Boundary training, more than half of UCC clergy are in dire stress of financial trouble. When in dire stress, any human being is tempted to disobey financial constraints.

Another study by Princeton economist Angus Deaton and Nobel-winning psychologist Daniel Kahneman found that added income brings a measurable impact on day-to-day contentment at least up to \$75,000. Why shouldn't contentment such as this be the case? The myth that money doesn't buy happiness speaks to a certain truth about life's priorities. However, having enough money to pay your bills, take care of yourself, buy the things you want, and live in comfort and luxury would make most of us more comfortable and satisfied. It's an obvious conclusion that doesn't need scientific verification.

Poverty, on the other hand, is miserable. Veronica and I lived rather poorly when we first married. Our oldest son and his wife feel the pressure of student loans but are paying them off, yet cannot afford rent so that is why they are living with us. More and more Americans are falling into poverty. I read somewhere that more than half of Americans cannot live on a 3 month backup

plan and are living paycheck to paycheck. Poverty in America had been rising for over 30 years prior and has increased drastically in the last two years. According to the 2020 census, more than half of all Americans were considered poor or low income. The United States is one of the richest countries in the world and also has one of the highest levels of economic inequality in the developed world.

The American Dream is slipping away. An American child's prosperity is now more dependent on their parent's wealth than in other developed countries. The idea that one can lift oneself out of poverty is increasingly unrealistic.

In a 2013 study, scholars Benjamin I. Page and Jason Seawright of Northwestern University, and Larry M. Bartels of Vanderbilt University, found that the wealthy are aware of the inequality yet still oppose anything that smacks of redistribution. The wealthy are also more active in politics. They block regulations and reform.

The public, on the other hand, leans more toward increased regulation. Over half of Americans say the government should redistribute wealth and tax the wealthy. Did you know in the early life of the universal church, the church being underground because of Roman persecution, pooled resources together in one collective pot and everyone lived and helped each other in communal living. In another words, it was honest, effective working, communal economic living and all that ended when Constantinople said Christianity will be the official state religion because he won a decisive battle based on answered prayer by God.

Income inequality is worse today than in Jesus' day. Jesus would have known of poverty and income inequality, as would have Paul. When God tells us to "fight

the good fight of the faith” and “take hold of eternal life”, we are not to sit by while others have little food and clothing.

This is not merely a call to personal charity. The worst evils arise not from individual neglect. They arise from nations, and large corporations who use their power only for the accumulation of wealth.

The writer of First Timothy is not telling us to be content with what we have. Those with only food and clothing cannot be fully satisfied with their situation. The path to eternal life instead involves generosity and sharing.

Be generous and ready to share. These important values must be incorporated into public policy. Our nation cannot be run by greed as we are seeing at the moment.

The bottom line cannot be allowed to run over the poor and working people. The idea that our problems can be solved by private charity is unrealistic. One of the last three Maine churches I served, Shorey Chapel UCC, operates Clearwater Food Pantry. The current government stripped our funding. Not able to obtain the food necessary for those who are starving. Dependence on Hannaford Donations is wonderful. Meanwhile demand for food among the working poor and elderly which is half of the clientele has gone up 40%. You see the discrepancy? More demand and less money? The Church is not the department of public social services, nor should it be. The church cannot possibly solve the entire infrastructure of social ills.

We have a nation of billions but the attention is on the 1%. All people need food, clothing and shelter. Those who are sick and physically challenged need healthcare. The young need an education. Our businesses need infrastructure. Our cities need to provide services. Meanwhile, our military commitments soak up over 50% of our budget. Crazy people gun down our children. Our nation has many problems to solve. It's expensive to run a nation.

If our constitution guarantees us anything, it guarantees us the right to the pursuit of happiness. The bible mandates that we look out for one another and care for the poor. Since a basic standard of living is so important to happiness, vast economic inequality, especially when coupled with corruption and greed, deprive Americans not only of a living wage but of their right to the pursuit of happiness as well. Realistically, we know life is run by greed. We need more integrity in our culture.

Did you know- when we write letters we end them with "Yours sincerely". Have you ever wondered why we do this? The practice has its origins in ancient Rome. Roman sculptors often concealed cracks in apparently flawless marble statues with melted beeswax. When the wax dried and crumbled, the angry purchaser sought compensation. Reputable sculptors guaranteed their work as sine sera, which means 'without wax'. Hence 'Yours sincerely'. Likewise, we are called to be people of integrity whose words are true. Source: reported in Talkback Trash and Treasure

Should we not be of the same mind when God calls us to care for all people with integrity, love, compassion?

A famous theologian, by the name Moltmann talked about "Fight the good fight", that is in our text," he said, 'where it's not the fight to overcome the best of the competition , the author is talking about but the fight to overcome the worst in ourselves.' What a beautiful reminder, to fight and overcome the worst in ourselves.

There is a wonderful true illustration of a trapper in the African Congo devised a clever monkey trap using a hollow gourd into which peanuts were poured through a small hole. The monkey would reach in and grab the peanuts, but the hole was too small to remove his closed hand. Unwilling to release his treasure, the monkey would be caught. That is a beautiful illustration of greed.

What are we spiritually grasping tightly...trying to keep under your control...unwilling to give to God? Perhaps it's a relationship? a possession? a plan, a goal, or a dream? Maybe it's an attitude of bitterness you should have released months ago? Perhaps God isn't able to bless you because your hand isn't open to receive God's blessings.

A closed hand is based on the faulty assumption that we know more about what's best for us than our all-knowing God whose wisdom is unfathomable. An open hand, however, reflects the humble awareness that Jesus can do more than we can do and that His plan for us is better than any we can devise. An open hand says, "God, You know how precious this thing is to me, but I acknowledge You are more precious. You have a greater plan for my life, and I don't want to miss it by clinging to my own tarnished treasures. I'm opening my hand to You in surrender and trust."

However, sometimes things go wrong. When the road you're trudging seems all uphill, When the funds are low and the debts are high, you want to smile but you have to sigh. Often the person who struggles has given up when they were so close to capturing the victor's cup. Success is failure turned inside out— and when you never can tell how close you are, it may be near when it seems afar despite the greed and lack of integrity we must stick to the fight when you're hardest hit. As W. Churchill reminds us, we must never, ever surrender. That is to say, you must not give up.

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.

Rev. John can be reached in the church office at 882-7544 during his office hours Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 9am to Noon. He can be reached by text or call at (207) 955-0055. His email address is revjohnwiscassetucc@gmail.com.

Happy September Birthday to Dianne Davis, Laurie LaBar, Pam Frenier, Gail Burke, Sherri Dunbar and Ron Sanchez.

Help Yourself Shelf September Wish List

Cereal * Taco Kits * Salad Dressing * Canned Pumpkin * Coffee * Pasta * Pet Food
Cake Mixes * Cleaning Products * Crackers * Jams & Jellies * Canned Meats

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sunday, October 5:

***** Native American Sunday**

***** During worship we will collect the Neighbors in Need (NIN) offering.** Gifts to Neighbors in Need (NIN) support the United Church of Christ's ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). The other two-thirds of the offering support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, direct service projects, and grants.

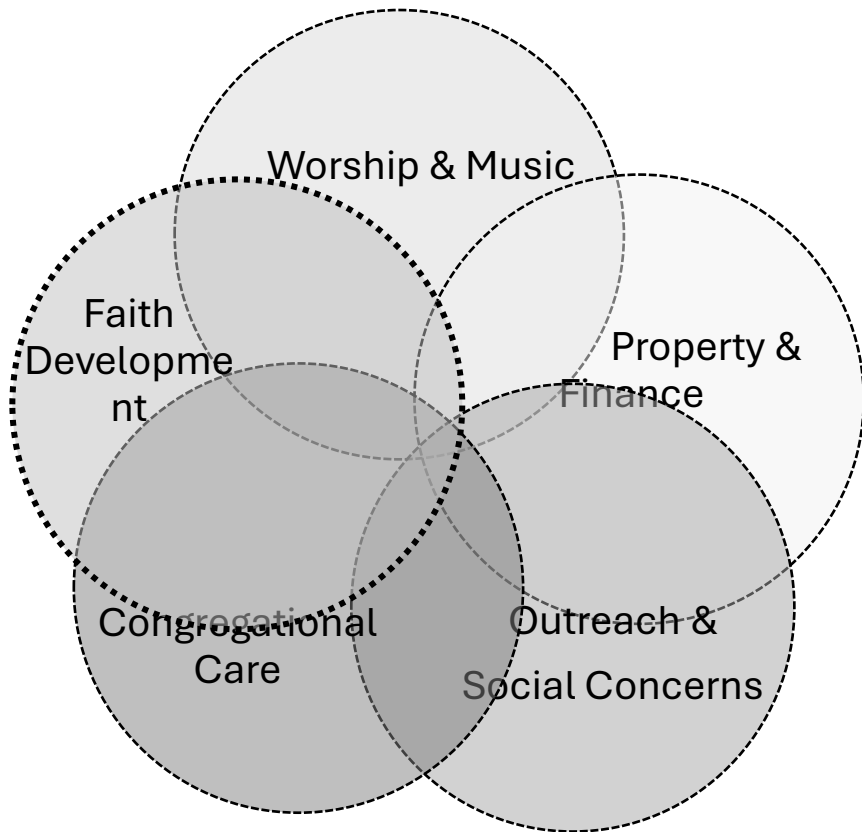
***** Outreach Team will meet in the parlor following Coffee Hour** to discuss and decide about organizations and causes to which our mission funds will be donated.

***** 2pm, Blessing of the Animals on the Town Common.**

***** The Chosen**, a tv series on the life and teachings of Jesus, will resume with **Season 5** on October 5th. All are welcome to join us in Fellowship Hall at **5:30 pm** to enjoy a potluck dinner, a weekly episode and discussion after. Season 5 will run for 8 weeks and will explore the last week of Jesus' life,

October 6, 6:30pm. Revision of the church's bylaws group will meet in the parlor. Everyone is welcome to attend. If you have any ideas on how to improve the organizational structure of the teams, we hope to hear from you on or before September 23rd. Please share your ideas with Rev. John or Cindy Clement! See the image below to refresh your memory of the team structure.

New Team structure showing that the teams have their own responsibilities and overlap with other teams to accomplish the Vision and Mission of the Church.



Sunday, September 28	No Choir Practice Sunday Worship 10:00am Coffee Hour following worship in Fellowship Hall. Delivery of the organ – late afternoon
Monday, September 29	Rev. John's Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm Mah Jongg 6:00 – 8:30pm
Tuesday, September 30	Rev. John's Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm Bylaws Review 6:30 in the parlor Sheepscot Valley Chorus 7:00pm in Fellowship Hall
Wednesday, October 1	Rev. John's Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm Organ Society Meeting 9:30am Feed Our Scholars packing 11:00am in the activity room upstairs
Thursday, October 2	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm Garden Club of Wiscasset evening meeting 5:30pm
Sunday, October 5	Choir Practice 8:10am Sunday Worship 10:00am Neighbors in Need Offering collected Coffee Hour following worship in Fellowship Hall Outreach Team meeting in the parlor following Coffee Hour Blessing of the Animals on the Town Common 2pm The Chosen, Season 5 & potluck, 5:30pm
Saturday, October 18	Memorial Service for Wally Roby – 11:00am, followed by a reception in Fellowship Hall