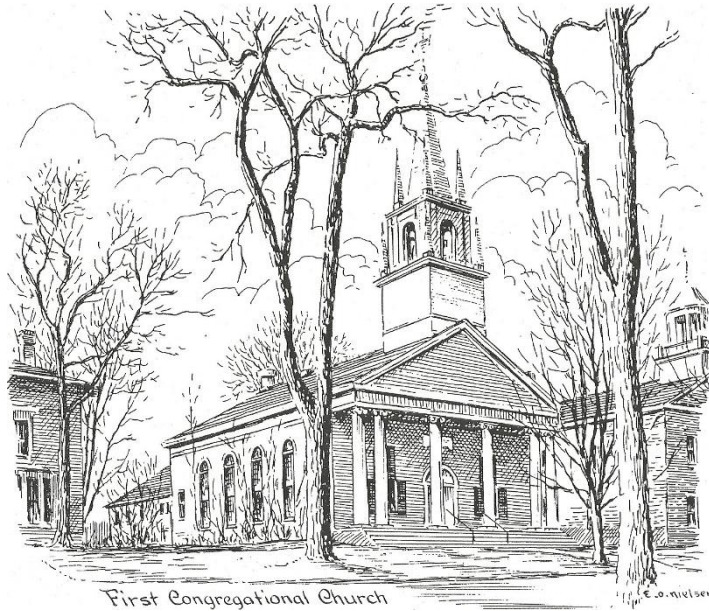


First Congregational Church
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
An Open and Affirming Church



First Congregational 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.

SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT-PALM SUNDAY- MARCH 29. 2026

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

Spiritual Contemplation Quote for the week: Spiritual Contemplation Quote for the week:” Life is full of ups and downs. Glorify God during the ups and fully trust in Him during the downs.” Unknown author

PRELUDE

The Palms

Jean-Baptiste Faure

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS

* CALL TO WORSHIP

L: We come to prepare for the holiest of weeks.

ALL: We will journey through praise, with joy on our lips; we will travel through betrayal and death, cradling hope deep in our hearts.

L: Jesus leads us through this week, and we will follow, for he is the life we long for, he is the Word who sustains us.

ALL: We wave palm branches in anticipation, we lay our love before him, to cushion his walk.

L: Setting aside all power, glory, and might, he comes; modeling humility and obedience for all of us.

ALL: Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is the One who brings us the kingdom of God.

* OPENING HYMN

‘Hosanna, Loud Hosanna!’ (Insert)

NCH No.213

INVOCATION TO PRAYER

We welcome you, Jesus ,humble king, king of our lives, with shouts of “hosanna” for you are the God who saves. We fix our eyes on you, Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith, our hope of a wilderness restored. Amen.

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

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

LIGHTING OF THE PEACE CANDLE

Global Mission Partner Prayer this week: El Salvador

MORNING PRAYER

SILENT MOMENTS FOR PERSONAL, AND PRAYER 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.

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Hebrews 11:32-40; Matthew 21:1-11

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

* HYMN

'All Glory, Laud and Honor'

No. 178

SERMON

'A Surprising Journey'

OFFERTORY PRAYER

CHORAL OFFERTORY

Hosanna to the King of Kings

Lloyd Larson

CHORAL RESPONSE:

Amen.

* 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

'Ride one, Ride on in Majesty'

No.179

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

"Postlude on "Ellecombe"

Henry Balcombe

You are invited to sit for the postlude.

* * * * *

“Our worship ends, let our service begin”

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Minister and Teacher: Rev. John Hogue

Music Director: Joel Pierce

Those serving you today:

Ushers: Mary McKinney

Reader: Veronica Hogue

Flowers: Reverend John

Online Streaming:

Shining the Light of Christ
FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH
in the Heart of Wiscasset

Hebrews 11:32-40

Young donkey - put hands at side of head as ears, wiggle ears and say “hee-haw”.

Donkey owner - hands on hips, or scratching head, “Why are you untying my donkey?”

Two disciples - shrug shoulders and say, “The Lord needs it.”

People - pretend to spread cloaks with a whooshing sound.

All disciples - shout “Blessed is the King who comes in God’s name. Hosanna in the highest.”

Pharisees - shaking finger “Tell your disciples to be

Quiet!” Stones - “You can’t always get what you want, but if you try sometimes, you might just find you get what you need.”

Hebrews 11:32- New Revised Standard Version

32 And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. 35 Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. 36 Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two,[a] they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented— 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. 39 Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, 40 since God had provided something better so that they would not, without us, be made perfect.

Matthew 21:1-11 Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

21 When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, 2 saying to them, ‘Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. 3 If anyone says anything to you, just say this, “The Lord needs them.” And he will send them immediately.[a]’ 4 This took place to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, 5 ‘Tell the daughter of Zion, look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’ 6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; 7 they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. 8 A very large crowd[b] spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!’

10 When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?' 11 The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'

This is the Word of God.

Thanks be to God.

New Revised Standard Version Updated Version

Today we are collecting our Noisy Offering, to benefit St. Philip's Help Yourself Shelf Food Pantry.

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 March Birthday to Tom Clement, Sullivan Joyce, Corinne Joyce, Marjorie Knight, Ann Light and Kent Wusterbarth

Help Yourself Shelf Wish List

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

As noted in Chimes, Hawaii is experiencing two significant Kona storms, causing relentless flooding throughout the Hawaiian Islands.

The [UCC Global HOPE team](#) is actively working with our siblings at the Hawaii Conference to link them with immediate response resources to try to lessen the impact of this unimaginable loss for our congregations.

We are accepting [donations](#) for this emergency. Your kindhearted generosity continues to remind our local congregations that they are not facing these widespread disasters on their own, that we are here praying and sending support to facilitate the long-term recovery of their neighborhoods and churches.

If you wish to make a donation to this cause, submit your check with the memo Hawaiian Floods 2026.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Easter Flower Orders-LAST CHANCE

Easter is next Sunday, April 5th, so orders for lilies (\$12), tulips (\$9) and hyacinths (\$5) must be in to the church office **TODAY**. Rev. John is also putting together a live flower arrangement at the altar cross. If you wish to donate to this, specifically, the donation will be \$5. **Order forms** can be found in the back of the sanctuary.

Maundy Thursday April 2

Join us for a Passover Potluck. We will be sharing a potluck meal for the Seder Meal. Please bring a potluck dish to share. We will eat at 5:30pm, and our Maundy Thursday Service will follow at 7:00pm. St. Philip's will be joining us.

Good Friday Service April 3

Service will be noon at St. Philip's

Coming Up This Week

Monday, March 30

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

Office Hours 9:30am – 1:30pm

Mah Jongg 3:00 – 5:30pm

Tuesday, March 31

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

Office Hours 9:30am – 1:30pm

Sheepscot Valley Chorus 7:00 – 9:00pm

Wednesday, April 1

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

Thursday, April 2

Maundy Thursday Seder 5:30pm & Service 7:00pm

Friday, April 3

Good Friday Service at St. Philip's -12:00pm

Sunday, April 5

Easter Sunrise Service 6:00am Wiscasset Pier/Dock

Sunday Worship 10:00am

Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall following Worship

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March 29th Sermon Hebrews 11:32-40; Matthew 21:1-11 Rev. John Hogue

Driving through Wiscasset in the summer, you know something about parades, especially around the 4th of July. However, I am not talking about the organized parades with bands and floats. I mean the kind where Route 1 suddenly becomes one long, slow-moving procession of cars, campers, motorcycles, and somebody pulling a boat who probably wished they would have stayed home. You creep along about three miles an hour, wondering if you'll reach the other side of town before Labor Day. Somewhere in that line someone leans out the window asking, "Is something going on up ahead?" Well... yes, something is going on. This is a little bit like the scene we just heard in the Gospel of Matthew 21. Remember these words? (Play JCS) The words of Jesus Christ Superstar Broadway play. The opening scene of Jesus Christ Superstar is – noisy, chaotic, and desperate. We are at the end of our journey through the wilderness, now into Holy Week. We've been preparing ourselves in this journey with Jesus into his most difficult period yet - his betrayal, trial, crucifixion and death.

Looking back, we can see how God has used dry, barren and difficult times to shape us. However, when we are in the middle of those difficulties it is almost impossible to get that kind of perspective. When good things come along they can take us by complete surprise, as God works in mysterious and unpredictable ways. Jesus arrives in the Holy City, not as a military superpower. He lives, not as a rich politician but as a homeless nomad. He preaches not vengeance to Israel's oppressors but grace and love for enemies. His triumphant entry into Jerusalem is not on a chariot of war, but fulfils the prophecy of Zechariah from hundreds of years before: lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." (Zechariah 9:9) The surprising answer to all of Israel's hopes is a humble man on a donkey. A humble man, who would further humble himself to die on a cross. The crowd who welcomed him with palm branches and shouts of "Hosanna" would quickly turn on him. The cross that appeared to be his final defeat would turn out to be his final victory over death, sin and evil. His resurrection would become the first fruits of the resurrection of all things. Riding a donkey is the kind of humble entrance that would fit right in around the countryside of Maine. Not flashy. Not dramatic. Just simple, steady, and real. For a moment it feels like the whole city believes. However, we know

something they didn't yet understand. The same city that cheers on Sunday will question him by Friday. Faith can be fickle when it's built on excitement alone.

The writer of Hebrews says something rather remarkable: All of the biblical witnesses lived by faith. Now here's the interesting part—their lives looked very different. Some won victories. Some suffered terribly. Faith didn't guarantee an easy road. It guaranteed a meaningful one.

Along the Midcoast in 2024, a fierce storm rolled in overnight. The harbor looked like a washing machine. Most boats stayed tied tight to the dock. Yet one older lobsterman—been fishing forty years—walked down to check the lines. A younger guy asked him, “Why bother? Nobody's going out today.” The old fisherman shrugged and said, “Son, storms are exactly when you check your lines. That's when they matter most.” Faith works the same way. It's easy to shout Hosanna when the weather is calm. The real test is whether we still show up when the storm rolls in. Let us remember, the people who were with Jesus on that day were the poor, the mocked and marginalized. The poor are not just those who are down on their luck. No, they are all the people who have been systematically excluded from participating in the benefits of society. They have been impoverished. They have been disabled. They have been enslaved. These are “the least” that Jesus talks about. Even today it seems like someone is being mocked with the following: physical challenges, people of color, queer people, immigrants and refugees.

To understand Palm Sunday, we need to set the scene. This is the beginning of Passover, so the population of Jerusalem swells with 2 million people, primarily the poor, from all over Israel. Remember that Passover is the celebration of Israel's liberation from bondage to another empire in another time. Jesus rides this donkey down the Mount of Olives, across the valley, up to the Golden Gate, and into the temple complex. As he is doing this, Pontius Pilate is entering the city across town at the western gate with thousands of Roman soldiers as a show of force. It's a military parade – (Sounds of Horses) so that the people of Israel don't get any funny ideas about liberation. Jesus' procession into the city looks ridiculous by comparison: a poor man riding a donkey with rows of peasants cheering him on. Jesus is mocking Pontius Pilate and the power of Rome while claiming and

communicating to the impoverished people of Israel that he is the true king. We know that they are getting the message because of their responses. It's not just the Roman Empire that Jesus resists; it is the kind of empire it is, the way it gains and maintains its power. Rome's policy of Pax (Latin meaning Peace) Romana required peace first, then justice. That is, when Rome occupied a nation, they secured it with violence then gave roads, aqueducts, baths and all the great achievements for which Rome is known. Rome said, 'You can have a good life once you stop resisting', often, that resistance ends when all the resisters are dead. Jesus is making an opposite claim: first justice, then peace. What does this mean? It means to make sure people are: 1) fed 2) housed 3) have an adequate health system, and you will have peace. So Jesus' movement of resistance against Rome and its Jewish collaborators was explicitly against a violent system of oppression. It is not just non-violence; it is anti-violence at its core.

People in America and all over the world are being oppressed by the 1% of the population, the oligarchs who control the world's wealth. I asked myself this question of our greatest challenges as a society: 1) hunger 2) the poor, 3) Inadequate housing 4) health care 5) the violence and shootings in our communities. My question: are we not hardening our hearts instead of building communities in this age of tension? If we harden our communities do we not also harden our children's hearts? Because life is full of challenges – betrayals and disappointments – we tend to build up a defensive layer to protect ourselves. Just like an onion. After a while, we identify so much with those defenses that we no longer know that the light of God shines within. If we teach our children that defenses are all we have, and if we surround them physically with the notion that the world is threatening and dangerous, are we encasing them in fear, how can that light shine? What kind of people do they develop into? Who do they become if all they know is violence against a world that aims to destroy them?

Hōsanná is a transliteration of the Hebrew term (hōsî-âh-nā) meaning "Oh, save now!" or "Please save!" The crowd at the procession wasn't shouting praises to Jesus. The crowd was begging Jesus to save them. From what? Let's remember this unforgettable image:

Two processions entered Jerusalem on a spring day in the year 30. . . One was a peasant procession, the other an imperial procession. From the east, Jesus rode a donkey down the Mouth of Olives, cheered by his followers. . . On the opposite side of the city, from the west, Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Idumea, Judea, and Samaria, entered Jerusalem at the head of a column of imperial cavalry and soldiers. Jesus's procession proclaimed the kingdom of God; Pilate proclaimed the power of the empire. Imagine the only sounds were the dreaded clomp, clomp of armored horses (reenact sounds) and chariot wheels upon the cobblestones (React sounds). Pilate, in regal splendor, probably wanted to be home in his seaside villa instead of here, with the unruly Jews.

Meanwhile, at the eastern gate, Jesus' noisy supporters were crying out (reenact sounds) Hosanna! Save us! Please save us now! They weren't asking for some sort of spiritual salvation, for a place in heaven, or for eternal life. They wanted to be saved from Pilate, from the legion entering the other gate, from Caesar, and that faux peace of Roman swords. They knew there was no Pax Romana, it was nothing but misery and death. The disciples thought that Jesus was going to take power. Maybe he was going to lead a revolt. Maybe he was going to snap his fingers and God's judgment would rain down on the Empire. One way or another, they thought he was going to win. Jesus didn't want to change the leadership; he wanted to eliminate leadership. Rather than violently seizing power, whether through divine or human means, he used all the nonviolent means at his disposal to save his people. He started with feeding the people, making sure their basic needs were met, putting them in a position to participate in their own liberation. Then he staged a series of provocations that we now call Holy Week. He knew he would die for it. Fortunately for us, we have another nonviolent means to bring about change – we can seek justice by nonviolence protest and we can vote. People who stay home on election day cede the definition of justice to everyone else. It is a sin of omission. It is violence against those who cry out to be saved. Hosanna! Save us, please! If we abandon them to those who will exploit, oppress, and destroy, then we are co-conspirators. Four million young adults new voters will be able to vote before November of 2026. Maybe they can do what we have failed to do. They will participate in their own liberation.

Hosanna Jesus! Free us, we pray you! Deliver us! These branch-waving protesters were begging to be rescued from oppression and injustice, shouting for liberation from the forces of violence and death. The Romans essentially forced the subjects into the imperial procession. By Friday, they weren't begging Jesus for salvation; they were praying they could avoid being crucified with him. We are frail people after all. Jesus will save them from violence and death — although not as anyone hoped or expected — by drinking Rome's bloody cup. The journey to the anti-imperial kingdom will be marked by a cross. Palm Sunday is the first step along a way that will end with a stunning event in a cemetery garden. Even after the tomb: Hosanna still sounds, still shouts today. In a week, we may shout our Easter Alleluias, but the truth is that our days now in America cry out hosanna. Children, parents, teachers die in pools of blood at schools and communities. American soldiers are dying. Lies pervade and divide people. The rich steal everyone's share, and we have an oligarchy. The courts unwind decades of justice. We have a poisoned earth and sky that beckons healing. Pax Americana? We may have believed that once. Now it is a peace enforced by fear and violence. A peace of privilege and guns. Hosanna, Jesus, hosanna! Save us, NOW!

Hebrews reminds us that faith is not just believing. It's trusting enough to act. Some of those saints changed the world. Others simply endured hardship with courage. Yet, all of them showed up. They trusted God even when the outcome wasn't clear. Jesus came to transform hearts slowly. That raises a question for us. What does faith look like here in Maine today? Despite the tensions in our society, faith sometimes looks heroic, but I believe often it is simple, like:

- Showing kindness to a neighbor
- Standing up for truth
- Forgiving when it would be easier to hold a grudge
- Serving others quietly

Faith isn't always loud.

What is a Palm Sunday faith? Faith is following God. Down the road.

Through the storm. Towards hope. Now the story continues with you and I. Faith is not just what we believe. Faith is whether we show up, especially now when we can wave our palms in protest. We proclaim and still shout: 'Hosanna, hey sanna, sanna, sanna!' That chorus is needed now more than ever. The road to the eastern gate beckons, calling you and I to open the floodgates light of God. This

is our calling, inside every one of us to navigate in these unpredictable times. We are the builders—the empowerment to draw upon mercy and compassion. We are called to create and build places of sanctuary, healing, and grace, even where cruelty.

"Hosanna, Loud Hosanna"

213

Jennette Threlfall, 1873; alt.

Mark 11:8-10; Matt. 21:15

1 "Ho - san - na, loud ho - san - na," the lit - tle chil - dren sang;
 2 From Ol - i - vet they fol - lowed a - mid a cheer - ing crowd,
 3 "Ho - san - na in the high - est!" That an - cient song is ours.

through pil - lared court and tem - ple the love - ly an - them rang;
 the vic - tor palm branch wav - ing, and chant - ing clear and loud.
 We hail our great Re - deem - er and sing with all our powers:

To Je - sus, who had blessed them close fold - ed to his breast,
 The one whom an - gels wor - ship rode on in low - ly state,
 "Ho - san - na, Christ, we praise you with heart and life and voice.

the chil - dren sang their prais - es, the sim - plest and the best.
 and glad to see the chil - dren, slowed down the don - key's gait.
 Ho - san - na! In your pres - ence for - ev - er we'll re - joice!"

Jennette Threlfall of England, who was disabled by two accidents,
 wrote hymns that inspired hope and courage in others. This text was
 published in her collection *Sunshine and Shadow*.

Tune: ELLACOMBE C.M.D.
 Gesangbuch der herzoglichen Württembergischen
 katholischen Hofkapelle, 1784

All Glory, Laud and Honor

1. All glo - ry, laud and hon - or to thee, Re - deem - er, King,
 2. Thou art the King of Is - rael, thou Da - vid's roy - al son,
 3. Thou didst ac - cept their prais - es; ac - cept the prayers we bring,

to whom the lips of chil - dren made sweet ho - san - nas ring!
 who in the Lord's name com - est, the true and bless - ed One;
 who in all good de - light - est, thou good and gra - cious King.

The peo - ple of the He - brews with palms be - fore thee went;
 to thee, be - fore thy pas - sion, they sang their hymns of praise;
 All glo - ry, laud, and hon - or to thee, Re - deem - er, King,

our praise and prayer and an - thems be - fore thee we pre - sent.
 to thee, now high ex - alt - ed, our mel - o - dy we raise.
 to whom the lips of chil - dren made sweet ho - san - nas ring!

WORDS: Attr. Theodulph of Orleans, c. 821; tr. John M. Neale, 1854, alt.
 MUSIC: Melchior Teschner, 1615; arr. William Henry Monk, 1861

ST. THEODULPH
 76.76D

Ride On, Ride On in Majesty!

179

1. Ride on, ride on in ma - jes - ty! Hark! all the
 2. Ride on, ride on in ma - jes - ty! In low - ly
 3. Ride on, ride on in ma - jes - ty! The wing - ed
 4. Ride on, ride on in ma - jes - ty! Your last and

crowds ho - san - na cry; through wav - ing branch - es
 pomp ride on to die; O Christ, your tri - umph
 squad - rons of the sky look down with sad
 fierc - est foe de - fy; bow your meek head to

slow - ly ride, O Sav - ior, to be cru - ci - fied.
 now be - gin o'er cap - tive death and con - quered sin.
 won - dering eyes to see the ap - proach - ing sac - ri - fice.
 mor - tal pain, then take, O Christ, your power and reign.

WORDS: Henry H. Milman, 1827, alt.
 MUSIC: John Bacchus Dykes, 1862

ST. DROSTANE
 LM

Milman, an Anglican clergyman, was a professor of poetry at Oxford when he wrote this hymn. Saint Drostane, nephew of St. Columba, founded churches in Ireland and Scotland.

