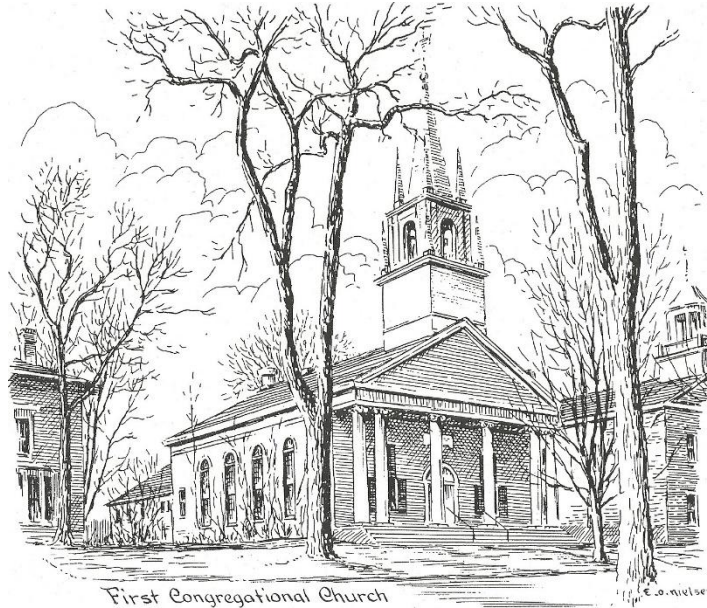


First Congregational Church
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
An Open and Affirming Church



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.

June 14, 2026

THIRD 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.

CHORALE RESPONSE

'Amen'

African American

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Romans 5:1-8

Results of Justification

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

L: The Word of God

P: THANKS BE to GOD

* HYMN

'I've Got Peace Like A River'

Red Hymnal No.426

SERMON

"Making Pearls"

YouTube link to [Accidental Courtesy](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbkKXK37DA?si=QhA1Hhh4IAs_4Klh), referenced in this week's sermon-

OFFERTORY PRAYER

OFFERTORY

'The Gift of Love'

Hal Hopson

Though I may speak with bravest fire, and have the gift to all inspire,
and have not love; my words are vain, as sounding brass, and hopeless gain.

Though I may give all I possess, and striving so my love profess,
but not be giv'n by love within, the profit soon turns strangely thin.

Come, spirit, come, our hearts control, our spirits long to be made whole.

Let inward love guide every deed. By this we worship and are freed.

Amen.

* 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 HYM *'Amazing Grace'* Red Hymnal No.401

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 He 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 *'March in C-Major'* Henry Purcell

You are invited to sit for the postlude.

* * * * *

“Our worship ends, let our service begin”

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Those serving you today:

Usher: Nancy Roby & Joan Shea

Reader: Rev. John Hogue

Flowers: Beth Maxwell

Online Streaming: Dewey Harris

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 June Birthday to Deane Attwood, Brenden Joyce, Sarah Joyce, Nancy Roby and Jan Shaw

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 *

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hospitalizations & Illness- There is no other way, in many instances, for the Pastor to know of the hospitalization or illness of a person other than you notifying the pastor or calling the church office. If you know of any illness, tragedy or good news in the congregation's life, please call Rev. John on his cell phone 207-955-0055 or the church office at 207-882-7544. Thank you.

June 14-Worship and Music Meeting- After worship

June 15 - Maine Steeples Fund Team is coming to visit the church, in anticipation of providing financial assistance for the restoration of our steeple.

June 20-Wiscasset Annual Community Yard & Treasure Sale-For info [email-wiscassetannualse@ gmail.com](mailto:wiscassetannualse@ gmail.com)

June 27- Strawberry Festival- at St. Philip's Church 10:00am-2:00pm

June 27- Lincoln County Unity and Community Pride Meet and Greet, Veterans Park, Newcastle 9:30am

Coming Up This Week

Monday, June 15

Maine Steeples Fund Team is coming to visit our steeple

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

Office Hours 9:30am – 1:30pm

Mah Jongg 6:00 – 8:30pm

Tuesday, June 16

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

Office Hours 9:30am – 1:30pm

Church Council Meeting 6:30pm

Wednesday, June 17

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

Office Hours 10:00am – 2:00pm

Thursday, June 18

Friday , June 19

Saturday, June 20

Wiscasset Annual Community Yard & Treasure Sale -Starts @ 8:00am

Sunday, June 21

Sunday Worship 10:00am-**Music Sunday & Father's Day**

Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall following Worship

Global Mission Partner this week: Italy

Mission Moment from Italy: Mediterranean Hope (MH) has for some time participated in the Italian “civil service” scheme for young adults. Volunteers gain valuable experience over their year with MH, whilst MH benefits from their skills and energy. Current volunteers are working with the team supporting refugees arriving through MH’s humanitarian corridors program. Many come with conflicting emotions about what lies ahead. Creating opportunities for newcomers to learn from those who have settled is therefore vital. Our volunteers recently attended one such meeting: “a safe space for dialogue where the past could meet the present and become a resource for the future.”

Another Italian partner is the Waldensian Church (Italy)

The Waldensian movement, stemming from the work of Peter Waldo in the 12th century in Lyon, France, was marked from its very outset by a firm attachment to the authority of scripture. In 1184, the movement was officially excommunicated and the Waldensians were then scattered to various parts of Europe. They put down particularly deep roots in the Alpine region of Piedmont, still known as the Waldensian Valley. At the Waldensian Synod of Chanforan in 1532, the Waldensians decided to adopt the Reformed system for the organization of their own life. They built their first church in 1555, but they continued to be exposed to severe persecution. A new stage in the history of the Waldensian Church in Italy was initiated by the Emancipation Edict of 1848, which although not a declaration of full religious liberty, did rescind much discriminatory legislation and enabled the Waldensians to establish themselves in various parts of Italy. In 1979, the Waldensian Church was federated with the Italian Methodist Church. The two churches maintain their separate identities but are joined in a single Synod. In 1990, the Waldensian-Methodist churches entered a covenant with the Baptist churches in Italy. The Waldensian Church’s membership is small, but it holds a disproportionately strong influence and positive reputation in society, due in part to its consistently strong and active sense of social responsibility and involvement.

First Congregational Church UCC
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Music Director: Joel Pierce
Sexton: Mary McKinney
Office Administrator: Hilary Atwood
Church Office Email – fccw@myfairpoint.net
Church Office Phone – 207 882-7544
Church Website – www.uccwiscasset.org



O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing

1. O for a thou-sand tongues to sing my great Re-deem-er's praise,
 2. My gra-cious Sav - ior and my God, as - sist me to pro-claim,
 3. Je - sus! the name that calms our fears, that bids our sor-rows cease,
 4. Glo - ry to God, and praise and love be ev - er, ev - er given

the glo - ries of my God and King, the tri-umphs of God's grace!
 to spread through all the earth a - broad the hon - ors of your name.
 is mu - sic in the sin - ner's ears, is life, and health, and peace!
 by saints be - low and saints a - bove, the church in earth and heaven.

WORDS: Charles Wesley, 1739, alt.
 MUSIC: Carl Gotthelf Gläser, 1828; adapt. Lowell Mason, *Modern Psalmody*, 1839

AZMON
 CM

I've Got Peace Like a River

1. I've got peace like a riv - er, I've got peace like a
 2. I've got joy like a foun-tain, I've got joy like a
 3. I've got love like an o - cean, I've got love like an
 4. I've got faith like an an - chor, I've got faith like an

1.
 riv - er, I've got peace like a riv - er, in - a my
 foun-tain, I've got joy like a foun-tain, in - a my
 o - cean, I've got love like an o - cean, in - a my
 an - chor, I've got faith like an an - chor, in - a my

2.
 soul. I've got riv - er in - a my soul.
 soul. I've got foun-tain in - a my soul.
 soul. I've got o - cean in - a my soul.
 soul. I've got an - chor in - a my soul.

WORDS and MUSIC: African-American spiritual

PEACE LIKE A RIVER

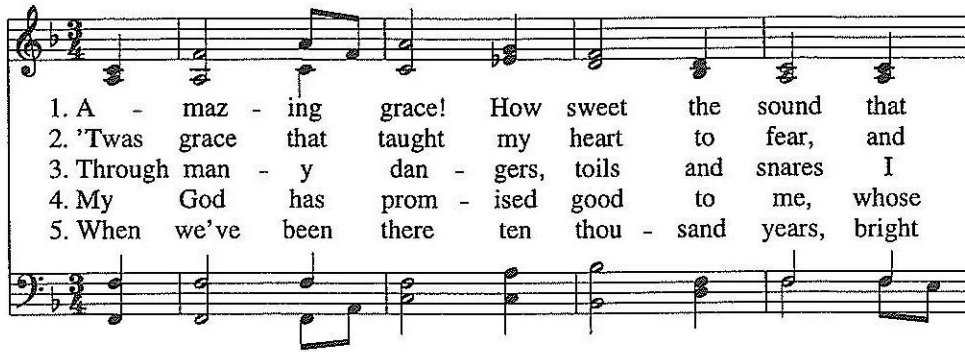
Spirituals draw heavily from Old Testament imagery, including 'peace like a river' from Isaiah 48:18. The New Testament also provided imagery for this song in the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy and peace (Galatians 5:22).

77.10 D

This won't be a love song till we know the words by heart.

— Bob Gibson

Amazing Grace! How Sweet the Sound 401



1. A - maz - ing grace! How sweet the sound that
 2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and
 3. Through man - y dan - gers, toils and snares I
 4. My God has prom - ised good to me, whose
 5. When we've been there ten thou - sand years, bright



saved and set me free! I once was lost, but
 grace my fears re - lieved; how pre - cious did that
 have al - read - y come; 'tis grace has brought me
 word my hope se - cures; God will my shield and
 shin - ing as the sun, we've no less days to



now am found; was blind, but now I see.
 grace ap - pear the hour I first be - lieved!
 safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
 por - tion be as long as life en - dures.
 sing God's praise than when we'd first be - gun.

WORDS: St. 1-4, John Newton, 1779, alt.; St. 5, *A Collection of Sacred Ballads*, 1790
 MUSIC: Shaw and Spilman's *Columbian Harmony*, Cincinnati, 1829; harm. FCC, 1997

NEW BRITAIN
 CM

Several years ago the Los Angeles Times carried the story of a lady who was traveling with her husband on a cruise ship. One evening, unknown to anyone else, she fell overboard. It was more than an hour before she was missed. When her disappearance was confirmed, the captain turned the ship around and, several hours after she had fallen overboard, she was discovered alive, out in the middle of the ocean. When she was brought on board she was asked how she managed to stay alive. She said, "I never lost hope."

Emil Brunner, the twentieth century theologian, says that hope is as necessary to life as oxygen. "What oxygen is for the lungs, such is hope for the meaning of human life. Take oxygen away and death occurs through suffocation; take hope away and humanity is constricted through lack of breath." The problem for each of us is how to find that hope which will sustain us-especially when the lamp flickers and we are afraid. In the passage, which was read this morning, Paul gives a formula for how we are to arrive at hope. What we need is a hope that will sustain us when the prospects aren't very encouraging. We need a hope that is more like a thermostat; one that exercises some control and keeps us in balance when trouble surrounds us. Paul knew about trouble. I wish to paraphrase his words from 11 Cor. 11:24-25- "Five times I received thirty-nine lashes, three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times shipwrecked;" that is only a partial list of his troubles. But none of this caused Paul to lose hope. We may not have had to go through what Paul went through for the sake of his faith, but most of us could probably identify with Lou Holtzman, football coach for the University of Arkansas, who said, "I know God doesn't send us more trouble than we can handle, but sometimes I think He overestimates my ability." Some people have found this endurance of which Paul speaks in the midst of troubles. When Beethoven was threatened with deafness, the most terrible of troubles for a musician, he said, "I'll take life by the throat and go on."

I read some time ago about Major Ahluwalia, who once climbed the highest mountain on earth, Mt. Everest. Then in 1965, he was shot in the neck by a Pakistani sniper. For 25 years he has been confined to a wheelchair, unable even to climb the steps to his front door. During this time he has been learning to climb another mountain. He calls it "The Everest within." It is no less threatening, lonely and forbidding than the world's highest mountain, but Ahluwalia feels that

this summit, too, is in sight. During these years of enforced inactivity, so much in contrast with his former active life, hope took root and survived. In time he had help; a young woman was attracted to him and spent time with him. Subsequently, they were married, "a heroic act" on his bride's part, he said. When asked what attracted her to a man who was an invalid, the bride said, "It was his attitude, his not giving up. I knew we could build a life together on the hope we share." This endurance is sometimes called perseverance. When Winston Churchill was in his eighties, he was invited to speak at Harrow, his boyhood grammar school, from which he had graduated some 70 years before. There was a rustle of anticipation among the boys when he rose to speak, and then a breathless quiet. One of the modern masters of eloquence was about to address them. Churchill looked out over his young audience and said, "Young men, never give up." After a long pause, he continued, "Never give up." Finally, after another long pause, he concluded, "Never give up!" Then he sat down. The youngsters were stunned. But he had given his whole autobiography to them in a few words. Perseverance was the keynote of his entire life, and that kind of perseverance is born, as Paul noted, in trouble and suffering. Paul then moves on to state that this endurance produces character. A word he uses for "character" is used of a metal that has been passed through the fire so that everything that is base has been purged out of it. It is made of precious metal as we use the word "sterling." It describes something out of which every baseness of alloy has been eliminated. When affliction is met with endurance or perseverance a person may emerge who is stronger, purer, better, nearer to God. But that kind of character doesn't develop automatically. It is developed by learning to be patient with our limitations. We stop spending our time asking, "Why did this have to happen to me?", and we start asking, "How am I going to make the best out of these circumstances?" It is the attitude of that prayer of serenity: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

Character building means that we have to constantly work on those things that threaten to undo us. Each year thousands of tourists journey to Mt. Rushmore in South Dakota to see the images of four great presidents of the United States carved in granite. What the average tourist doesn't realize is the constant work that goes on to keep this giant sculpture from deteriorating. Each year workers go over the entire carving, removing bird nests, pulling out shrubs that have grown in crevices, and filling hundreds of natural rock fissures which, if left unattended, would fill with

water, freeze, and shatter the image. Our lives are like that. We have to constantly tend our flaws and fill them with better things or our image will be shattered. This "tending to our image" can be tough work in any field, and often the only thing that keeps us at it is a vision that we can be better than we are. That is an aspect of hope. There are musicians who have so dedicated themselves to music that they will spend most of their waking hours polishing their talent. There are actors, dancers and writers who practice their art with precision and grace only because they have learned to endure when their bodies want to stop. In developing character, it is important to have a vision—a vision that we can be more than we are by enduring temptation. A number of years ago a man by the name of F. W. Robertson was trying to think through some tempting options which faced him. He retreated to the mountains in his search for strength. Later he gave this testimony: "The only way a person can come through the agony of his choices unscathed is to hold fast to those things which are certain--the simple landmarks of morality. In the darkest hour through which a soul can pass, whatever else is doubtful, this at least is certain ... it is better to be generous than selfish; better to be true than false; better to be brave than a coward. Happy is the person who in darkness of soul, has dared to hold fast these venerable landmarks."

Endurance produces character.

The third thing Paul says is that character produces hope.

People of character are people who want to make a contribution. They see that there are problems in life, and rather than retreating to personal comfort and non-involvement, they seek to be of use. There is a play about a man who died and woke up in the afterlife. The afterlife was beautiful beyond his highest expectations. Everything was given to him before he could ask. Every potential desire was fulfilled before he could even know that he wanted it. He had to work for nothing; everything was beautifully presented to him. Finally, in the intolerable boredom of it all, he said to his attendant, "Now wait a minute, I want something that I am going to have to work for and wait for." The attendant said, "But that is impossible here." The man, in anger, said "All right, then I'll go to hell." To which the attendant responded: "Sir, where do you think you are?" Life without challenge is hell. People of character are willing to accept challenges and face problems, and that gives meaning and hope to life; their lives and those of others. The hope of which Paul speaks comes from the conviction that God is involved in the world. At the beginning of the passage we read this morning, he says that our hope is that we will share the

glory of God. That means we have a future that is related to God. Norman Vincent Peale once asked Dwight D. Eisenhower who was the greatest person he had ever met. Without an instant of hesitation he responded, "My mother. She never had much schooling, but she was wise in God's wisdom. She went to school to the greatest of all books, the Bible. And she acquired real wisdom. He went on to say, "Once when I was a boy, my brothers and I were playing a card game with my mother. I had been dealt an utterly impossible hand, and I began to complain about it. She said, 'Boys, put your cards down. I want to tell you something, especially you, Dwight. You are playing a game in your home with your mother under loving circumstances. We all love each other here, and you have been dealt a bad hand. Now,' she said, 'when you get out in life where they don't love you so much, you are going to be dealt many bad hands. What are you to do? You are to pray to God. You are to trust God and, like a man, you are to play out the hand that is dealt you.' "And," said Eisenhower, "that is one of the wisest things I learned in my youth."

This reminds me of how a pearl is made. Here's what happens. For whatever reason, the oyster shell sometimes gets pierced and a grain of sand – a foreign substance that doesn't belong there – slips inside. Like the antibodies in our own immune systems that rush to the scene when bacteria invade the body, all of the resources of the tiny, sensitive oyster rush to the spot where the foreign body is irritating the oyster. The oyster's body releases healing fluids to soothe the pain caused by the irritant. These healing fluids would have simply remained dormant if this problem had not occurred. Over time, these fluids cover the irritant and the wound is healed. The result of this process over time? A pearl. That sand represents adversity. Adversity is a fact of our human lives. It sneaks in uninvited and unwelcome, bringing with it things that were never in our plans, happenings that just weren't supposed to be there. Some experiences are mere irritants; others are major catastrophes that change the entire course of our lives. The way we choose to heal from our wounds will have everything when it's over. Some never heal because they allow bitterness to corrupt their spirits and rob them of the possibility of building a happy future. Others stay wounded because they refuse to acknowledge they have a problem, carrying the hurt all alone and not taking advantage of people who are willing and able to help. Still others get stuck in the endless pursuit of "justice" as they define it. Friends, there is a better way. Paul teaches us in this text. Paul's words can be paraphrased into pearl steps. People who thrive

despite setbacks in life are those who can courageously deal with them and determine to move ahead, no matter what. In my observation they have these five pearl strategies to help them recover and overcome what life throws at them.

1. They recognize that adversity is normal. Instead of asking, “Why me?”, a better question is “What can I learn from this situation?” After all, we live in an imperfect world in which “stuff happens” and in which other people are free to make choices that affect us.
2. They aren’t afraid of their own emotions, but they choose not to be forever controlled by their feelings. Ignoring the feelings of grief and pain send those “underground”, only to resurface when some similar event triggers the memory. Neither do healthy survivors allow their negative emotions to control their lives on and on. They find the balance. They acknowledge, feel, and express their pain, but then they do the things that allow them to move on. They don’t take their pain out on others, catching themselves in an endless cycle of anger and attempted revenge.
3. They focus on what they do have to work with, not what they don’t. Alexander Graham Bell once said, “Sometimes we spend so much time looking longingly at the door that has closed for us that we fail to see the one that has opened.” Yes, you should grieve losses...but then, assess what you do have. Look creatively at how you can use your existing resources to build quality back into your life.
4. They use the skills of letting go of the unworkable, the unchangeable, and the uncontrollable. The famous Serenity Prayer sums up this principle: “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”
5. They maintain an internal faith and hope that they will heal and will come out on the other side. Even after you have given up hope on a particular situation, never give up your faith that you can have a good life ahead. You can, with God’s strength and your good choices.

Like the pearl, you can radiate the beauty and make pearls that come from the healing process. Consider Daryl Davis who made pearls. Daryl is a musician. Some years ago, he was playing piano in a bar for a band in which he was the only African American. During a break, a man from the audience approached him and told him how much he enjoyed his music and that he'd never heard a black fella play so much like Jerry Lee Lewis. They struck up a conversation about the origin of that music and... Fats Waller and Little Richard. The next thing you know, they're

sitting together in a booth having a drink and talking about music. It turns out, the fella says, you know, this bar here, this is a Klan bar. As in the Ku Klux Klan. So he tells Daryl, "So yeah, you're a bit of a novelty." Then he shows Daryl his clan membership card. Now it would have been reasonable for Daryl to leave, but instead he asked this fella about why he joined the clan, and what's it like, and what he actually believes. Because Daryl was so astonished that anyone so friendly and with whom he seemed to have so much in common could, on paper anyway, hate him enough to join an organization whose very existence is kind of all about that. Well, the two of them wound up becoming friends, and Daryl wound up meeting a lot of clan folks. Over time, Daryl earned some fame for getting literally hundreds of people to quit the Ku Klux Klan. One at a time. He's even converted Grand Wizards and Grand Dragons away from the clan. Some of them have given him their old robes. He didn't do it with speeches or with rallies, but one-on-one in bars and homes and barbecues and occasionally a wedding. I highly recommend the documentary on Daryl called [Accidental Courtesy](#). Which is a display of someone with such a peculiar belief in the goodness of people. Daryl Davis is in my opinion the real Captain America. You can read further by going to the YouTube link [cbkKXK37DA?si=QhA1Hhh4IAs_4Klh](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbkKXK37DA?si=QhA1Hhh4IAs_4Klh)

A Maine fisherman once said, "I don't trust the weather forecast nearly as much as I trust the anchor." Romans 5 reminds us that Christian hope is not wishful thinking about tomorrow's forecast. It is confidence in the anchor of God's love, revealed in Jesus Christ, our anchor, that holds even when the storms come.