

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.



February 23, 2025

February 23, 2025
Seventh Sunday After the Epiphany
10:00am

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

We joyfully welcome **all** to our worship service, including those on Zoom!
We invite everyone to Coffee and Community in Fellowship Hall immediately
after our worship service! If you are visiting, please identify yourselves to the
ushers.

The First Congregational Church of Wiscasset is an Open and Affirming Church
affiliated with the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ
denomination.

For Your Contemplation:

“The great new fact of our time is that the center of gravity in the Christian
world has shifted from Europe and North America to Africa, Asia, and Latin
America. Think of this: in the past hour Christian numbers in the Global South
have increased by 18,000, while in the Global North Christian numbers have
decreased by 3,000.” . . . F. Dean Lueking

PRELUDE

Gnossienne No. 5

Erik Satie

RINGING OF THE BELL

MUSICAL INTROIT

Fable

Dmitry Kabalevsky

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

* INVITATION TO WORSHIP

We have been called the salt of the earth.

Let us remain hidden and distinctive.

We have been called the light of the world.

Let us shine brightly in the midst of pain and confusion.

We have been called a city set on a hill.

**Let us, like Jerusalem, lift our gates, lift our hearts, lift our voices in the
worship of God!**

UNISON PRAYER

Great God of the old and the new, take our lives and make them like new wine. Refresh our spirits. Disturb our apathy. Strengthen us with Your courage. For we seek to be a new people, and Your presence gives us joy. Be with us as we worship, and as we go forth from this place with new resolve and energy to be Your faithful servants, fishing for people. Amen.

JOYS AND CONCERNS: After each Joy or Concern please respond:
Pastor: “Lord,” **Congregation: “Hear our Prayer”**

MORNING PRAYER

SILENT MOMENTS

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.

MUSICAL RESPONSE

Amen

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Luke 5:1 - 11

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

People: Thanks be to God.

SERMON:

“Fishing For People”

Rev. David C. Myers

Text: “Do not be afraid, from now on you will be catching people” Luke 5:10b

OFFERTORY PRAYER

OFFERTORY

Improvisation Op. 84, No. 5

Gabriel Fauré

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

This Is a Day of New Beginnings

No. 414

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

Reverie

Claude Debussy

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 in Glory Comes

Unison
Refrain

Je - sus in glo - ry comes, the earth now re - joic - es.

O - pen the gates be - fore him, lift up your voic - es.

1. Who comes to us in glo - ry; how shall we call him?
2. In all of Gal - i - lee, in cit - y or vil - lage,
3. Sing then of Da - vid's Son, our sav - ior and broth - er;
4. He gave his life for us, the pledge of sal - va - tion;
5. He con - quered sin and death, he tru - ly has ris - en.

He is Em - man - u - el, the prom - ised of a - ges.
he goes a - mong the peo - ple, cur - ing their ill - ness.
in all of Gal - i - lee was nev - er an - oth - er.
he took up - on him - self the sins of the na - tion.
And he will share with us his heav - en - ly vi - sion.

WORDS: Willard F. Jabusch, 1966, alt.
MUSIC: Israeli folk song; arr. John Ferguson, 1973

PROMISED ONE
12 12.12 12

Luke 5:1 - 11

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

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

People: Thanks be to God

Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore



1 Lord, you have come to the lake - shore look - ing
 2 You know so well my pos - ses - sions; my boat
 3 You need my hands, full of car - ing, through my
 4 You, who have fished oth - er o - ceans, ev - er



nei - ther for wealth - y nor wise ones; you on - ly
 car - ries no gold and no weap - ons; you will
 la - bors to give oth - ers rest and con - stant
 longed for by souls who are wait - ing, my lov - ing



asked me to fol - low hum - bly.
 find there my nets and la - bor.
 love that keeps on lov - ing.
 friend, as thus you call me:

Refrain



O Lord, with your eyes you have searched me, and while



smil - ing have spo - ken my name; now my



boat's left on the shore - line be - hind me. By your



side I will seek oth - er seas.

David C. Myers
February 16, 2025

“Fishing For People”

Luke 5:1 - 11

Text: “And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching people.” . . . Luke 11:10b

OK. We have witnessed the Nativity stories and been to the Jordan River to watch Jesus be baptized. Now Jesus is about to begin His ministry as the now proclaimed beloved Son of God, with Whom God is well-pleased. From all that we can gather, Jesus has been well-schooled in rabbinical tradition – He knows the Scriptures inside and out, knows the Scriptures to their very heart as to what God’s great plan is

However, if we have learned anything about Jesus, it is that His life is one that does not follow the traditional. Tradition would have had Him coming in royalty as a strong military king that would restore Israel as the pre-eminent country in the world. The expectations for a Messiah were that the Messiah, the anointed one would end the domination Israel experienced at the hands of the Imperial Roman Rule. Instead, Jesus is born in the most humble of circumstances, unnoticed by the religious leaders of the time, witnessed by only shepherds and three Magi who are in reality astrologers or magicians from eastern foreign lands of a different faith. Only the Roman ruler Herod took notice of His birth. His childhood was apparently not remarkable – we have only one vignette at age 12 during a pilgrimage to Jerusalem with His parents when Jesus decided to stay to quiz the religious leaders in the temple.

So, when it comes time for Jesus to implement a strategy, it should not be surprising that Jesus would shun the typical routine. Instead, Jesus went fishing – fishing for people that is. Instead of choosing the best of the best to be His disciples, Jesus went to the banks of the Sea of Galilee and chose ordinary folk – in this case some fishermen. There is no evidence that they have had much, if any, training in the religious faith. And yet these people are the ones Jesus chooses. But Jesus has a game plan. Jesus promises that the current skills of these humble fishermen are transferable. Jesus tells them He will teach them to fish for people. In many ways this is one of the two bookends to Matthew’s Gospel. At the beginning, the disciples are to go and fish for people with Jesus and at the end of

Matthew's Gospel the resurrected Christ gives us the Great Commission – go and make disciples! In other words, grow. The Gospel is to be shared. And if we bring this to our own time, it tells us we need to grow because that the Gospel is not all about us! Or as a bumper sticker says, “Don't keep the faith – share it!” But sadly, the church of our time has chosen a different tack. We have been content to stay where we are, tend the flock that previous fishers of people gathered, and maintain the status quo. Once upon a time Christian growth in the United States was rampant. We had the Great Awakening in the mid-1800's. And in the 1880's the Protestant churches got together and created a strategy to evangelize the world. Different denominations were assigned to different countries. We had incredible church growth in the post-World War II years. Imagine my shock in 1983 when the lay leaders of the Korean United Methodist Church with whom my congregation at the Lexington United Methodist Church shared a church building told me that they considered themselves as missionaries to the United States!

And, just to give you an idea of how far we have fallen from heeding Christ's mandate for growth, consider this fact from *Christian Century*¹ (the magazine): “The great new fact of our time is that the center of gravity in the Christian world has shifted from Europe and North America to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Think of this: in the past hour Christian numbers in the Global South have **increased** by 18,000, while in the Global North Christian numbers have **decreased** by 3,000.” This would seem to me to have enormous implications for who we are and how we go about living out our Vision and Mission as a church.

With that background, now let's return to our Scripture Lesson for today and make a couple of observations.

1.) *First of all, Jesus chooses people not on the basis of what He knew, but on the basis of what they knew.* When he called the fishermen he

¹ *Christian Century*, Jan. 11, 2011, “Reflections on the Lectionary” F. Dean Lueking, p 21.

sold them on a new job – yet one that they had some skills for. He began with them. Instead of catching fish, they would now fish for people. The skills required would largely remain the same, but the catch would be different. What a brilliant stroke! Jesus’ call to each of us begins not with what Jesus’ does best, but with what we do best. In this way Jesus reassures the disciples that they can do it – because it is not so different from that which they already are doing. We just have to adapt what we already know.

So often we talk about our faith in Jesus as if it **all depends on us**. But Jesus employs a different tactic. He begins with an assurance that He believes in them! Have you ever thought of your faith in that manner? What does it mean to you ***that God believes in you?!?!?*** I think that this is wonderfully empowering and energizing.

With this example, following Jesus’ command to grow the church is not as hard as we make it out to be. Jesus begins with who we already are!

2.) Secondly, you can’t catch fish by staying home and talking about it – you have to go where they are. Or as one guide told me on a fishing trip to the Boundary Waters between Ontario and Minnesota, “a fish is not caught that is not sought.”

I’ve done a fair bit of fishing in my day. I have some wonderful memories. Some of them are when I tried hard to catch fish – others are those lazy summer days when Deb and I would go out in the boat and drag a line as we slowly toured the lake.

Some of my earliest memories include fishing with my father, uncle and grandfather on Cold Stream Pond in Enfield, Maine.

Another of my favorite memories was taking my son fishing for bluefish and stripers off Cape Cod. You can’t imagine my joy and pride seeing Nate, my then 7-year-old son reel in a bluefish off Cape Cod about half as big as he was! Fishing long lay dormant for Nate – until about 15 years ago when he was struck by the bug again. He is now an avid bass fisher in New England. And he talks about things like structure, what the water temperature is at various depths, and what the current hatch of flies is.

Along the way I have learned a few things about fishing. The most obvious thing

is you can't catch fish staying home. My granddad reduced it to a very simple, but hard to do formula. To catch a fish, you have to:

1. put the right bait
2. in front of the right fish
3. at the right time

In other words fishing takes some work and some planning. "A fish is not caught that is not sought."

So, as we go about seeking our "fish" we will find that we will be taken to some of the most beautiful spots in the world. Fishing has taken me on the open ocean and as a side benefit I saw 4 right whales basking in the sun. It has anchored me on the beautiful lake of our summer place in Damariscotta, Maine. And while living in the Washington, DC area I was opened to the beauty of the Chesapeake Bay and their rock fish (that's what they call stripers) – big 30-40 pound stripers. In 2018 I had a big thrill in the waters off Cabos San Lucas where the waters of the Pacific meet the waters of the Gulf of Cortez – what Jacques Cousteau called the aquarium of the world. I hooked a 9 foot black marlin and the three men (with a lot of help from the boat's captain and first mate) landed it about an hour later!

Likewise, fishing for people will take us to some other beautiful spots – where people are! Just as fish will not just come to us, neither will people – no matter how good our worship is, no matter how much we advertise. They need to be sought in order to be caught!

But . . . "What do you do when the fish stop biting?" Apparently most modern-day disciples could answer the question by saying, "we stopped fishing," maybe arguing that the fish are all gone. But that does not fulfill the invitation that Jesus puts before His disciples, "follow me and I will teach you to fish for people." Stopping fishing or not seeking to find fish is not an option for the faithful. By implication it seems to me that we can't be faithful to Jesus without also obeying Jesus. Jesus enlists people to go out and fish for people. And yet, if you look at the statistics of our church and nearly every other church in our part of

the world, we are not fulfilling Jesus' mandate. Following the fishing analogy, we are sitting on the bank thinking about fishing or talking about fishing without ever baiting a hook and going fishing!

Most of the skills we know and for various and sundry reasons have developed over the last 50 years or so focus on maintaining the "fish" already caught. And sadly, this includes most pastors who have been trained in the recent years. For many of us, evangelism had a bad name – it seemed that that was all about numbers and not about developing a deep spirituality or a mission conscience. So, we tried to "grow in depth" our existing members – grow spiritually and grow in mission. Apparently, we forgot that people die and move away. But without new people coming sooner or later by employing this strategy, congregations would decline.

However, any of you who have been recently "hooked" by Jesus in this congregation could testify that the reason why you are here in the church is that someone found that "lure" – that word, that presentation, the invitation, and the warmth that drew you here. Too often we think that all we must do is advertise our services, send out letters, and by some miracle, the fish will jump into our boat!

So, the first thing that we have to do is resolve to be better fishers of people! Maybe I'm making a huge assumption here, but ***I am assuming we want our church to grow.*** And if we do, we have to ask ourselves "what will it take to be better fishers of people?"

I hope this doesn't sound obvious – but the first thing it means is that we can't keep "fishing" the same way we have been doing it. And it doesn't mean that we can just keep doing what we have been doing – only better! That only means we will be doing ineffective things better which has only proven to produce about a 60-year decline in Protestant church membership. You have no doubt heard me say this before, but doing the same things over and over and expecting different results is the definition of insanity! Jesus understood this – on a day when the disciples were fishing and not catching anything – Jesus told them to change the way they did it – they fished on the other side of the boat!

]When I would go fishing often the first question I had when I came home was, “Catch any fish?” I hated that question. It’s the wrong question to ask someone who has not been successful; I consider it even to be impolite – all it does is rub my nose in my lack of success. So I would feel depressed and mumble to myself, loudly enough to be heard, “It’s called fishing, not catching.”

However, the question, “did you catch anything?” does serve to bolster my resolve to become a better fisher. And I think that is true of us as disciples of Jesus. To be true to Jesus we need to resolve to be better fishers of people! If we are not catching fish, if we are not reaching out beyond our walls, not reaching the unchurched, then we are not being true to the Great Commission to go and make disciples.

But here is the good news: Jesus believes in us! And Jesus has promised us that He will make us – teach us – to be fishers of people! So perhaps we need to live in the expectation that anyone who takes fishing seriously would have. Here are some “lures” that you might use.

- Expect Jesus to show up, sometimes when you least expect it, to utilize your little deeds of love and justice, your words of hope and encouragement, your expressions of welcome and acceptance to “catch” someone in the great gracious net of God’s grace.
- And here are a couple more “lures” from the book of Hebrews: “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.” (13:2);
- and also from Hebrews, “And let us consider how to **provoke** one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, . . .” (10:24f)
And how about that?!?! Provoking each other to do good works!

I think following the mandate of Jesus we will never have to feel the sting when someone asks us “did you catch anything?” for Jesus has promised us that we can be fishers of people.

This Is a Day of New Beginnings

414

1. This is a day of new be - gin - nings,
2. For by the life and death of Je - sus,
3. Then let us, with the Spir - it's dar - ing,
4. Christ is a - live, and goes be - fore us

time to re - mem - ber and move on,
love's might - y Spir - it, now as then,
step from the past and leave be - hind
to show and share what love can do.

time to be - lieve what love is bring - ing,
can make for us a world of dif - f'rence
our dis - ap - point - ment, guilt and griev - ing,
This is a day of new be - gin - nings -

lay - ing to rest the pain that's gone.
as faith and hope are born a - gain.
seek - ing new paths, and sure to find.
our God is mak - ing all things new.

WORDS: Brian Wren, 1978, rev. 1987
MUSIC: Brian Wren; arr. Peter Cutts, 1978

DRONFIELD
98.98

United Reformed minister Brian Wren wrote this text for a New Year's Day service in Oxford, England. He also composed the tune which was arranged by his frequent collaborator Peter Cutts.

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Those serving you today:
Interim Pastor: Rev. David Myers
Pianist: Sarah Oeste
Ushers: Susan & Dean Attwood
Reader: Angie Eddy
Flowers: Ron Sanchez

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Noisy Offering will be collected today.

Maine School of Ministry Special Offering will be collected **TODAY**, Sunday, February 23.

The “Outreach Team” is inviting everyone to a meeting, Sunday March 2, 2025.

Summary of the upcoming meeting.

The Outreach Team held their first meeting after worship on Sunday, February 2. A complete summary of the meeting will be in the March Chimes.

One of the tasks that is included on all of the Team lists of duties is to **“coordinate with other teamsin raising funds.”** This is up to all of us, team members and all members of the Congregation.

To begin that task, there will be a joint meeting after worship Sunday, March 2, to begin brainstorming fundraising ideas. Hopefully, we will be able to raise funds equal to what Summerfest provided for us to give to others.

We need everyone’s input and ideas! Please plan to attend this important first step with the Outreach Teams!

Organ Society has guest speaker on February 26, 10am.

Healthy Lincoln County Substance Use Prevention Educator, Will Matteson, will be presenting to the Organ Society on **Safe Storage and Disposal of Medication** on February 26th at 10 A.M. Participants will receive a free Weekly Pill Organizer and Deterra Drug Deactivation pouch, and also have the opportunity to ask questions and learn about local resources.”

Safe storage and disposal of medications is not the most exciting topic, but it is one of great importance. Preventing accidental exposure to drugs in the home is the first reason to store drugs safely in the home, and remove them when they are

no longer in use. Getting rid of old drugs may not be as simple as we like when we realize that flushing them down the toilet is contributing to watershed pollution. Healthy Lincoln County can help by providing FREE medication safety tools and spreading awareness of other local resources.

There are additional copies of the “Annual Report” available for pickup in Fellowship Hall.

There are also copies of the “Basic Tenets of the 2025 Governance Trail” available for pickup in Fellowship Hall.

“Lost and Found” Looking for your favorite baking dish? Maybe it is in the kitchen "Lost and Found" on the shelf over the stoves. Over time pans and plates are left behind when people bring coffee hour goodies. Please put your name on the pans and dishes you bring so they can be returned to you in a timely manner. There is a roll of blue painter's tape and a marker in the kitchen that you can use to identify your dishes when you bring them in. These items will not be kept indefinitely.

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 and place it on the plate of offering. It will only be shared with the pastor.



Coming Up:

Sunday, February 23:	NO Choir Practice Sunday Worship – 10:00am Maine School of Ministry Special Offering. Noisy Offering will be collected today The Outreach Teams brainstorming fundraising ideas meeting has been postponed to Sunday, March 2 following church. All are welcome and encouraged to attend to discuss. <i>Shop Organ Society</i> has Jigsaw Puzzles for sale. Youth Group, 11:45am
Monday, February 24:	Mah Jongg, 6:00pm – 8:30pm
Tuesday, February 25:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm
Wednesday, February 26:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm Organ Society Meets, 9:30am * Organ Society has guest speaker on February 26, 10am. Healthy Lincoln County Substance Use Prevention Educator, Will Matteson, will be presenting to the Organ Society on Safe Storage and Disposal of Medications. Feed Our Scholars(FOS), 11:00am
Thursday, February 27:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm
Saturday, March 1:	P.E.O. 9:00am-1:00pm
Sunday, March 2:	Choir Practice, 8:10am Sunday Worship – 10:00am No Youth Group

Need a ride or Can you provide a ride?

If you need or would be willing to provide a ride to and from church on Sundays for those unable to drive themselves, please call Lisa Hargreaves at 207.315.0802.

Volunteer Opportunity at St. Philip's Church

St. Philip's is looking for volunteers to in the Bargain Basement thrift shop. Contact Sharman Ballantine at sharman1738@gmail.com or 207 481 1043 for more info.