



Christ
is risen!

CHRIST IS RISEN INDEED! ALLELUIA!

*First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Wiscasset, Maine 04578*

Easter Sunday
April 20, 2025
10:00am

* Indicates to please stand with your heart or your posture. The choir will guide you as when to stand.

We joyfully welcome **all** visitors to our worship service, including those who join us on Zoom. We invite you to join us for coffee and refreshments in Fellowship Hall immediately following the Worship Service.

For Your Contemplation:

“Made like Him, like Him we rise; . . . ours the cross, the grave the skies.”
. . . from “Christ the Lord is Risen Today”

PRELUDE *I'm Gonna Sing/Ain't-a That Good News?* arr. Larry Shackley

RING OF THE BELL

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHORAL INTROIT *Christ is Alive!*

* EASTER HYMN *Christ the Lord is Risen Today (verses 1-5)* No. 205

* INVITATION TO WORSHIP

Easter begins in despair. Our life, our love, our hope forever dead, crushed by the boulder, bottled up in a cave.

Who will roll away the stone?

Easter takes us by surprise, early in the morning. The obstacles we expect to face are removed. Where once death and despair laid locked in time now the bright light of hope sprouts wings to fly from emptiness.

It is, at first, too good to be true.

Everywhere we look we see new life!

In seeds and buds, in smiles and touch, we discover God's energizing presence.

Death can never be the last word.

God has raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Christ is present among us today.

Praise God for new life within and among us this day! Alleluia!

PRAYER ON EASTER DAY (UNISON)

God of all ages and all people, the shadows and gloom of Good Friday have been dispersed by the light and color of Easter Sunday. We rejoice in Your power that turns our sorrow into joy, our despair into hope, our defeat into victory and evil into goodness. Help us on this Easter morning, O God, to burst out of the tombs that have trapped us: tombs of selfishness and sinfulness, greed and gluttony, scandal and corruption, pride and prejudice. Let now a new life of divine grace and human love burst forth from each of us this Easter day, through the grace of Jesus Christ, the Risen One. Alleluia! Amen!

PSALTER READING

Psalm 118:14 - 24

CHORAL ANTHEM

Christ is Risen, Alleluia!

Jay Althouse

Congregation join in singing verse 1 of "Christ the Lord is Risen Today" when invited.

JOYS AND CONCERNS:

After each Joy or Concern please respond:

Pastor: "Lord," **Congregation: "Hear our Prayer"**

MORNING PRAYER

SILENT MOMENTS FOR PERSONAL PRAYER

OUR LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

CHORAL RESPONSE

Amen

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Luke 24:1 – 11

Liturgist: This is the Word of God.

People: Thanks be to God.

* HYMN

Thine Is the Glory

No. 214

SERMON: *“Please, No Explanation Inside the Church”* Rev. Dr. David Myers

Text: “But their words seemed to them to be an idle tale, and they did not believe them.” . . . Luke 24:11

OFFERTORY PRAYER

OFFERTORY

* PRESENTATION WITH THE EASTER DOXOLOGY

No. 49

**Your name we bless, O risen Lord,
And sing today with one accord.
Once more upon thy people shine,
And fill the world with love divine, Amen**

* Hymn

Crown Him with Many Crowns

No. 210

BENEDICTION

BENEDICTION 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 *Toccata on "A Mighty Fortress" and "Jesus Christ is Risen Today"*
Gordon Young

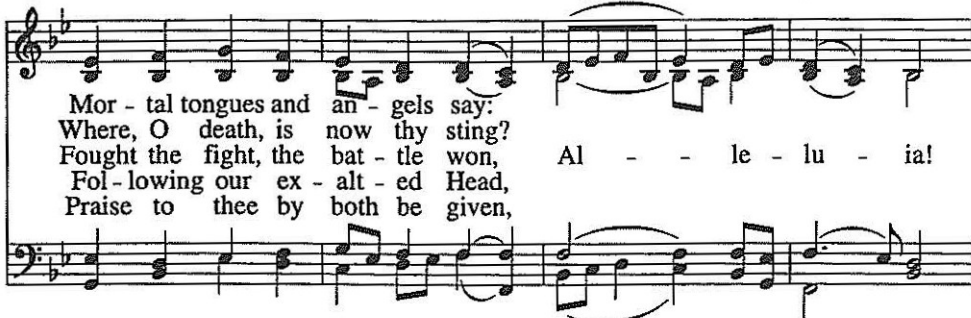
† † †

You are invited to sit for the postlude.

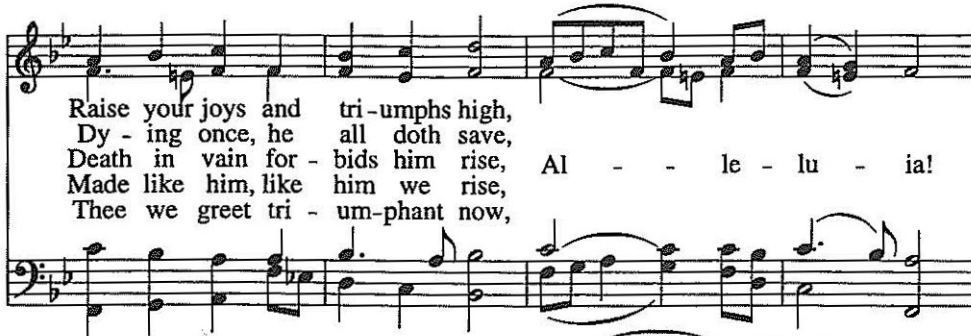
“Our worship ends, let our service begin.”



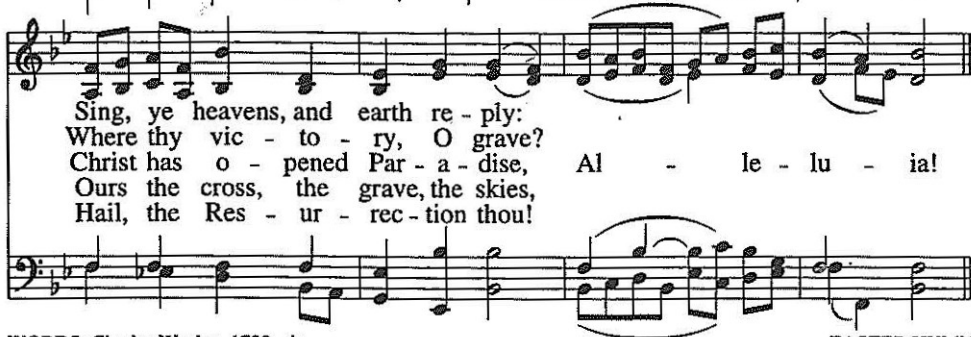
1. Christ the Lord is risen to - day,
 2. Lives a - gain our glo - rious King,
 3. Love's re - deem - ing work is done, Al - - le - lu - ia!
 4. Soar we now where Christ has led,
 5. Hail the Lord of earth and heaven!



Mor - tal tongues and an - gels say:
 Where, O death, is now thy sting?
 Fought the fight, the bat - tle won, Al - - le - lu - ia!
 Fol - lowing our ex - alt - ed Head,
 Praise to thee by both be given,



Raise your joys and tri - umphs high,
 Dy - ing once, he all doth save,
 Death in vain for - bids him rise, Al - - le - lu - ia!
 Made like him, like him we rise,
 Thee we greet tri - umphant now,



Sing, ye heavens, and earth re - ply:
 Where thy vic - to - ry, O grave?
 Christ has o - pened Par - a - dise, Al - - le - lu - ia!
 Ours the cross, the grave, the skies,
 Hail, the Res - ur - rec - tion thou!

WORDS: Charles Wesley, 1739, alt.
 MUSIC: Arr. from *Lyra Davidica*, 1708

EASTER HYMN
 77.77 w. alleluias

Thine Is the Glory

1. Thine is the glo - ry ris - en, con - quering Son; end - less is the
 2. Lo! Je - sus meets us, ris - en from the tomb; lov - ing - ly he
 3. No more we doubt thee, glo - rious Prince of life! Life is nought with -

vic - tory thou o'er death hast won. An - gels in bright rai - ment
 greets us, scat - ters fear and gloom; let the church with glad - ness
 out thee; aid us in our strife; make us more than con - querors,

rolled the stone a - way, kept the fold - ed grave - clothes
 hymns of tri - umph sing, for our Christ now liv - eth;
 through thy death - less love; bring us safe through Jor - dan

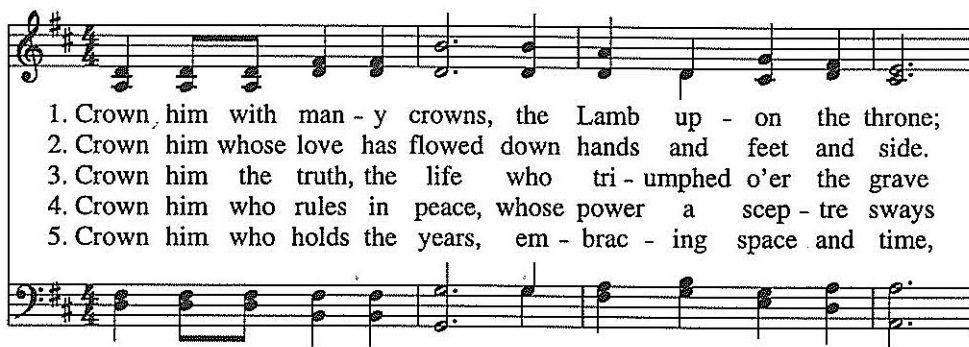
Refrain

where thy bod - y lay.
 death hath lost its sting. Thine is the glo - ry ris - en, con - quering
 to thy home a - bove.

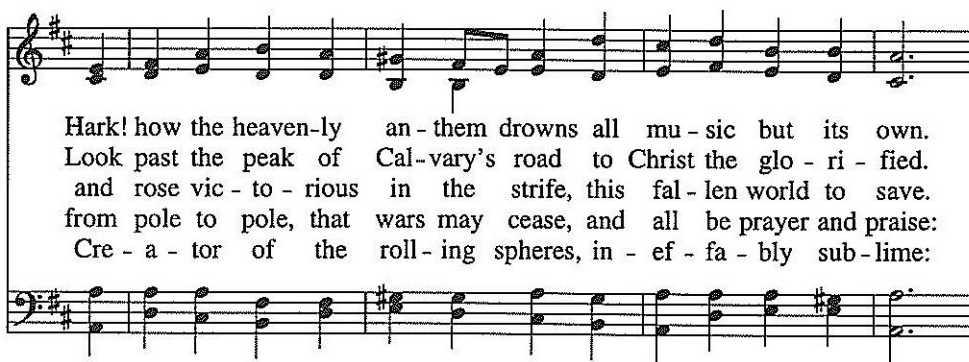
WORDS: Edmond L. Budry, 1904; tr. R. Birch Hoyle, 1923, alt.
 MUSIC: Georg Frederick Handel, 1751

JUDAS MACCABEUS
 55.65.65.65 w. refrain

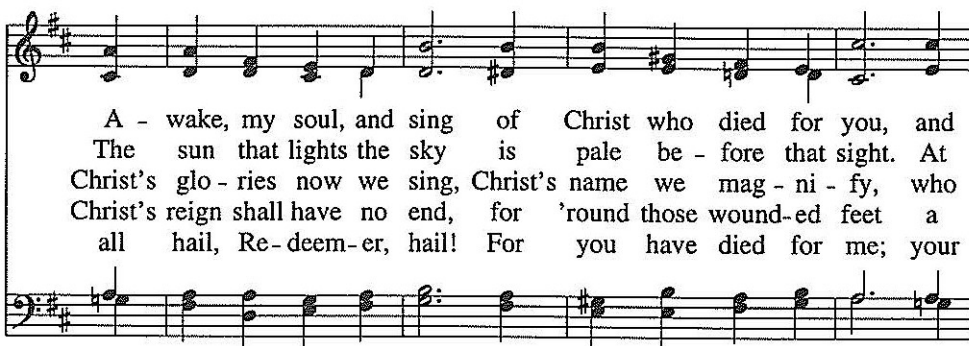
Crown Him with Many Crowns



1. Crown him with man - y crowns, the Lamb up - on the throne;
 2. Crown him whose love has flowed down hands and feet and side.
 3. Crown him the truth, the life who tri - umphed o'er the grave
 4. Crown him who rules in peace, whose power a scep - tre sways
 5. Crown him who holds the years, em - brac - ing space and time,



Hark! how the heaven-ly an - them drowns all mu - sic but its own.
 Look past the peak of Cal - vary's road to Christ the glo - ri - fied.
 and rose vic - to - rious in the strife, this fal - len world to save.
 from pole to pole, that wars may cease, and all be prayer and praise:
 Cre - a - tor of the roll - ing spheres, in - ef - fa - bly sub - lime:



A - wake, my soul, and sing of Christ who died for you, and
 The sun that lights the sky is pale be - fore that sight. At
 Christ's glo - ries now we sing, Christ's name we mag - ni - fy, who
 Christ's reign shall have no end, for 'round those wound - ed feet a
 all hail, Re - deem - er, hail! For you have died for me; your

WORDS: Matthew Bridges, 1851, and Godfrey Thring, 1874; adapt. Thomas H. Troeger, 1993, alt.
 MUSIC: George J. Elvey, 1868

DIADEMATA
 SMD

PSALM 118:14 - 24

The Lord is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation.

There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous: “The right hand of the Lord does valiantly;

the right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.”

I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord.

The Lord has punished me severely, but he did not give me over to death.

Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.

This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it.

I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Luke 24:1 - 11

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

David C. Myers
April 20, 2025
Easter

“Please, No Explanations Inside the Church”

Luke 24:1 – 12

Text: “Then they (the women who had gone to Jesus’ tomb to anoint the body, . . . and they told all this to the eleven (disciples). But their words seemed to them to be an idle tale, and they did not believe them.”
 . . . from Luke 11:8 -11

In February, 1993 I was in the lands we call Holy. Specifically, I was standing outside the church in Tabgha. It is at the base of a hillside, right on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. The church commemorates where Jesus fed the 5,000 with the loaves and fishes. I was fascinated by a sign beside the front door of the church that said, “Please no explanations inside the church.” This sign was meant for the Tour Guides not to give explanations about the site inside, but to have the Tour Groups take their groups on a quick tour and then gather them outside because the church was so small. Whatever the intent of that sign, I think it is a most appropriate title for an Easter Sermon.

You see, despite its centrality to our faith, Easter is not an easy message to preach. I have some experience with preaching on Easter mornings. And I know there are people who come to church on Easter hoping to find the key

that will explain everything and give meaning to a life filled with struggle and pain.

And yet, so often on Easter, when it comes to preaching, I have always felt a bit like Archie Bunker, when, in a fevered argument with his agnostic son-in-law, Michael (or as Archie called him, Meathead), asks, “Archie if there is a God, why is there so much suffering in the world?”

After the awkward silence that follows in which Archie tries desperately to come up with an answer, he finally yells, “Edith would youse come in here and help me? I’m having to defend God all by myself!”

And there are days that Archie is me all over, defending God . . . all by myself.

But I know that’s not entirely true; for your presence indicates that each of you have, at some point in your life, deeply felt God’s love. And, in fact, your presence here means that I am ***not*** defending God all by myself. There is something to this Easter story that gives you hope and that fuels your faith.

But I don’t think Easter answers all your questions. In fact, Easter may raise more questions than – at least I think – any of us are comfortable answering with any degree of surety.

Let’s face it, do we ever go to the cemetery and find the grave empty? Only on Easter does someone rise from the dead. And only on Easter do angels in white linen speak to us. On no other day of the year do we even give passing thought to such unlikely happenings. So, it is no wonder when we

hear women who were the first witnesses to the resurrection tell us they have experienced such things, we still don't listen.

And if you are looking for answers to these questions, I can only respond, "Please, no explanations inside the church."

But we are not alone – approximately 2,000 years ago Jesus' disciples didn't listen either.

For despite our nearly 2,000 years of rehearsal that has transformed Easter into a magnificent spectacle of glory, there is everything about it that doesn't fit with the rest of our life experience. It's almost as if we suspend our understanding of the world for this one day each year, and then on Monday we go back to understanding the world in our customary manner.

Our worldly wisdom tells us Easter is all wrong; perhaps even, all foolishness. Hans Kung reminds us, "Nothing compels us to believe." It doesn't make sense. In the Lukan passage we read, "But their words seemed to them to be an idle tale, and they did not believe them." It was, after all, too much to believe. Indeed, they were filled with fear.

Wouldn't you be frightened if you went to the grave and found the body gone, and an angel dressed in white linen spoke to you? Indeed, this magnificent spectacle that Easter has become was originally a day of fear and trembling, causing people to ponder in fear and amazement.

Oh, to be sure, people came to believe – or we wouldn't be here today. But they were not compelled to believe. Certainly, they were not compelled by any certainty of the logic of what happened. There weren't any

explanations that could make this fit. We are left to wonder, to struggle about what it all means.

And that is the beauty of our faith. We are not forced by any convention, or any law, or even cold, hard logic to believe. Quite the contrary. We believe, we have faith, not because of compelling rational logic, but because just when we think we have life all figured out, or just when we are convinced there is **no** way out, Jesus breaks loose and shatters the logic. And there is simply no rational explanation that can be given.

It has been said by one of the world's greatest theologians – whose name is . . . anonymous – that, “The simplest meaning of Easter is that we are living in a world in which God has the last word.”

I once heard Tony Campolo, an evangelical minister who teaches sociology, preach a good Friday sermon in which he said that “Today’s Friday, but Sunday’s a comin’.” His central tenet was that we so often get caught up in the reality of a Good Friday world – Jesus is put in a tomb, darkness sets in, hope is gone. We all know what a Good Friday world is – we find ourselves unemployed, or facing a difficult illness, or a family member dies, or raising our children seems to be a challenge beyond our capabilities, . . . and the litany goes on. It is on the Fridays of our lives that the harsh reality, the angst of the world sets in. It is the Fridays when we don’t dare to be able to dream dreams and have visions. It is on the Fridays when we are overwhelmed with the seemingly inevitable weight of the world’s problems –

environmental pollution, war, terrorism, illnesses we can't control, hunger, starvation, racism – the list is seemingly endless.

Fridays, no matter how discouraging they can be, make sense. They fit into the world as we live in. No matter how prevalent the madness, there is a way to figure Fridays out.

But Sunday's a comin'! The truth is that we are living in a world in which God – not the Good Friday forces – has the last word.

While writing a journal as he experienced the grief of his wife's death, C.S. Lewis discovered, "the best is what we understand the least." When our Fridays are changed into Easter Sundays there is no way we can fully figure it out.

"No explanations inside the church."

Permit me some Scriptural excess please – I want to read a couple more sentences from Mark's Gospel about the first discovery of the resurrection – and this time from the Peterson paraphrase:

"After rising from the dead, Jesus appeared early on Sunday morning to Mary Magdalene, whom He had delivered from seven demons. She went to His former companions, now weeping and carrying on, and told them. When they heard her report that she had seen Him alone and well, they didn't believe her." (Mark 16:9 – 11)

You would have thought, the loyal disciples, after hearing the words from the woman would have understood what was happening, that this was the

resurrection message. But they didn't – not at first; not until Jesus own resurrected presence spoke to them in harsh terms for their unbelief and hardness of heart. It was simply too much to believe.

“No explanations inside the church.”

Even a study of the church and the Bible do not explain the resurrection; rather it is the other way around – ***they are explained by it.*** There would have been no Church and no Bible unless there had first been the fact of the resurrection. On Good Friday Jesus died an apparent failure, His friends scattered and His movement stopped. But on Easter He rose from the dead, His friends reassembled, and his movement started up again, never to stop!

The Resurrection explains these things. It changes our perspective.

Photographers learn that it makes a great deal of difference where the camera is placed. Most of us have had the humiliating experience of taking a picture where the subject turned out to be all feet. This did not mean there was nothing wrong with the feet, but that only from where we stood, we had focused on the wrong thing. The Resurrection is that event that changes our focus. The Resurrection has become the focus where we see life in proportion. When we stand there, we see things differently; what is happening before us is reflected through different values. Our focus changes, not necessarily the subject. It is important to note that the Resurrection did not change the world in which the disciples lived – any more than our world will be any different when we walk out of this building. Rome was still Rome and the political and military structures went about business as usual. Washington will still be

Washington, and whatever burdens you brought with you today will still have to be faced when you leave.

But to those who were changed by the Resurrection – and hopefully, some of you will be changed – there was – and is – an entirely different focus. On the Fridays in this frightening, crucifying world the question was, “what is this world coming to?” But after the resurrection the focus of the question changed to, “What has come to the world?”

P A U S E

A little boy and his father were driving down a country road on a beautiful spring afternoon. Suddenly out of nowhere a bee flew in the car window. Since the little boy was deathly allergic to bee stings, he became petrified. But the father quickly stopped the car, reached out, grabbed the bee, and squeezed it in his hand. Then he released it. But as soon as he let it go the young boy became frantic once again as the bee buzzed around in the car.

His father saw his son’s panic-stricken face. Once again, the father reached out his hand, but this time he pointed to his hand. There still stuck in his skin was the stinger of the bee. “Do you see this?” he said. “You don’t need to be afraid anymore, I’ve taken away the stinger for you.”

And this is the message of Easter. We do not need to be paralyzed and totally pre-occupied by the Fridays anymore. Oh, the Fridays still exist; we can’t deny their presence. But the Good News is that Christ faced Fridays for us and with us. Christ walked the streets of injustice and the cities of

oppression. Christ bore the humiliation and pain of being abandoned with all hope seemingly gone.

But that was Friday.

Today is Sunday! And by Christ's resurrection, we are saved from sin. Christ has taken away the sting! Christ is risen! Fear is gone! Even if we can't explain it, we realize that our lives are explained by the resurrection.

New life is ours!

Hallelujah!

Amen!

Thank you to all those who helped decorate our church this morning with beautiful Easter flowers!

David & Deborah—in memory of Carl & Bec Myers, in memory of Sarah Myers LaGrossa and in honor of our son Nathan, Olivia & Ava LaGrossa, our grandchildren

Allison Crosscup—in memory of my father David King

Sally Howe—in memory of loved ones

Angela Eddy—in loving honor/memory of our grandparents

Martha Speed— in memory of family and in honor of Bill Taylor

Jackie & Jessica Lowell— in memory of loved ones

Nancy & Wally Roby—in memory of loved ones

Linda & Oscar Wallace—in honor of Kim & Kelly

Jan & Steve Whitfield—in memory of Bernice & Bill Whitfield and in memory of Barbara & John Kammerer

Ron Sanchez & Tom Cramer—in memory of our mothers, Christine & Ethel

Carol & George Peck—in memory of Frank Donnell & Duane Peck

First Congregation Church Wiscasset—in memory of past members and in honor of current and new members

Easter flowers may be picked up next week in the office.

Flowers that remain will be delivered to members of the community who must work on Easter (police officers, firemen/women, nurses, caregivers, etc.) as an expression of our gratitude for their service.

Thank you to all those who donated this year and last year to help decorate our church with beautiful Easter flowers! In addition to the flowers in our sanctuary this morning, Easter flower bulbs were purchased with these funds and planted last year in the garden beds at the front of the church by the Diaconate. Later this spring and each year to come, this "resurrection garden" will rise as a beautiful reminder of the hope which springs forth eternal!

Easter Sunday, April 20, 2025
Those serving you today:
Ushers: Susan & Deane Attwood
Reader: Cindy Clement

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The Easter envelope in your bulletin is to allow you to make a special gift to your church. The proceeds will take that ordinary money and transform it into extraordinary love through the mission and ministries of our church and beyond!

Sunday, April 27, 2025, Special Worship Service 10:00am,
Baptisms (2), Confirmation **and** the Reception of New Members

The Organ Society is pleased to host our own Jan Whitfield on Wednesday, April 23, at 9:30. Jan will lead a workshop on making greeting cards. Everyone who attends will have the opportunity to make 3 cards to take home. This is an Organ Society fundraiser. The fee for this workshop is \$20. Sign up early as we must limit this to 12 participants. Please join us in the church fellowship hall.

Chair Yoga with Samantha Main, Wednesday, April 23, 12:00pm.

Interim Minister: Rev. David C. Myers
dmyers421@gmail.com
W. 207-882-7544, H. 207-563-8217
Music Director and Organist: Joel Pierce
Sexton: Mary McKinney
Office Administrator: Ted Gilbert

First Congregational Church (UCC)
PO Box 350, 28 High Street
Wiscasset, ME 04578

Church Office Email – fccw@myfairpoint.net
Church Office Phone – 207-882-7544
Church Website – www.uccwiscasset.org

Coming Up This Week:

Sunday, April 20:	Easter Day Sunrise Service 6:00am, Town Pier *Special Need offering will be taken. Easter Day Worship 10:00am in the FCCW Sanctuary
Monday, April 21:	Mah Jongg, 6:00pm – 8:30pm
Tuesday, April 22:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm. Sheepscot Valley Chorus, 7:00pm – 9:00pm
Wednesday, April 23:	Organ Society, 9:30am Feed Our Scholars (FOS), 11:00am Chair Yoga with Sam, 12:00 noon
Thursday, April 24:	Garden Club Wiscasset, 1:00pm
Sunday, April 27:	Second Sunday of Easter Worship 10am Outreach Team Meeting following church Youth Group, 11:45am

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.

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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